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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) of 30 April 2007, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2007. In that resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on the situation in Western Sahara before the end of the mandate period. The present report covers developments since the issuance of my report dated 13 April 2007 (S/2007/202).

II. Recent developments in Western Sahara

2. On 30 July 2007, in a speech to mark the eighth anniversary of his enthronement, King Mohammed VI of Morocco stated that Morocco was ready to negotiate on the basis of a consensual autonomy solution conceived within the framework of the Kingdom's sovereignty.

3. On 7 September 2007, parliamentary elections were held in Morocco, which included voting in the Moroccan-controlled Territory of Western Sahara. Representatives of the Frente Polisario para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) wrote to me on 19 August 2007 and again on 9 September 2007 to condemn the decision of the Government of Morocco to hold such elections in Western Sahara, calling instead for a free and fair vote on self-determination for the Western Saharan people.

III. Activities of my Personal Envoy

A. Status and progress of the Negotiations

4. This section of the report covers the status and progress of the negotiations on Western Sahara since the issuance of my report dated 29 June 2007 (S/2007/385*). In its resolution 1754 (2007), the Security Council called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions in good faith, taking into account the developments of the last months, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and

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mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Furthermore, in that resolution the Security Council requested me to set up those negotiations under my auspices.

5. To implement Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) a first meeting of the negotiation process was held at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, New York, on 18 and 19 June 2007, as described in my report dated 29 June 2007 (S/2007/385*). In that first round of talks, the parties agreed to a communiqué from my Personal Envoy stating that during the meeting, negotiations had started as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1754 (2007) and that the parties had agreed that the process of negotiations would continue in Manhasset in the second week of August 2007.

6. As planned, the parties participated in a second meeting at the Greentree Estate on 10 and 11 August 2007. Algeria and Mauritania also attended, as neighbouring countries. During the opening session, the parties made their respective statements, in which they reiterated their commitment to collaborating with the United Nations in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). Although they both confirmed their respect for the principle of self-determination and accepted Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) as the mandate for the negotiations, their positions remained far apart on the definition of self-determination.

7. Following the opening session, an exchange of views took place with regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). The parties then heard presentations by United Nations experts and participated in discussions on subjects related to natural resources and local administration. They also held separate meetings with my Personal Envoy. Finally, at the initiative of my Personal Envoy, the parties were invited to consider a possible expansion of the existing confidence-building measures. In reply to this initiative, the delegation of the Frente Polisario indicated that it was satisfied with the confidence-building measures currently being implemented and remained open to the formulation of additional measures, subject to internal consultations. The delegation of Morocco thanked my Personal Envoy for his initiative on a subject that was indeed important for the population of the region. However, it added that the subject of confidence-building measures was discussed within the framework of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which constituted and should remain the appropriate forum for assessing and proposing such measures, and that for the consideration of possible proposals for confidence-building measures that would be beyond the scope of that forum, another appropriate forum should be found.

8. During the meeting, the parties agreed to the communiqué of my Personal Envoy, contained in annex I to the present report, in which they acknowledged that the current status quo was unacceptable and that they were committed to continuing the negotiations in good faith.

9. Since then, unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to find a mutually acceptable date for the resumption of the negotiations. As the parties' commitment to continue the negotiations in good faith is not in doubt, my Personal Envoy intends to avail himself of the intervening time to explore ways to encourage the parties to enter into more substantial negotiations than have taken place in the first two rounds.

B. Assessment of my Personal Envoy

10. In his communiqué (annex I), my Personal Envoy declared that there had been substantive talks in which the parties interacted with one another and expressed their views. In retrospect, this may seem a somewhat rosy summary of the second round, for although the meeting was again characterized by a good atmosphere and courteous behaviour, it also manifested the same rigid positions. Owing to the latter, regrettably, the first two meetings, taken together, have not resulted in the implementation of paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), for it cannot really be maintained that the parties have entered into negotiations. This was not due to a lack of good faith on their part, but primarily ensued from predictable problems with the interpretation of the Council's call on them to enter into negotiations without preconditions. As early as last year, in the Secretary-General's report of 16 October 2006 (S/2006/817, paras. 18-19), the Council's attention had been drawn to the fine distinction between preconditions and fundamental positions: neither the view of Morocco that its sovereignty over Western Sahara should be recognized, nor that of the Frente Polisario that the final status of the Territory should be decided in a referendum with independence as an option, could be accepted as preconditions, but both were widely known to be the respective parties' fundamental positions. In the run-up to the negotiations in June, these positions were not treated as preconditions: both parties were ready to sit down at the negotiating table without having their fundamental positions endorsed beforehand. Thus, formally, everything was in order, but as these fundamental positions were mutually exclusive, they prevented each party from seriously discussing the other party's proposal. As a result, the parties did, indeed, express their views and even interacted with one another, but they mainly did so by rejecting the views of the other party, and there was hardly any exchange that could in earnest be characterized as negotiations.

11. Although the fact that two meetings have taken place is a cause for satisfaction, my Personal Envoy is concerned at the deficient implementation of a unanimously adopted Security Council resolution that at the time of its adoption was hailed as a breakthrough in dealing with the question of Western Sahara. In the above-mentioned communiqué issued after the second meeting, the parties acknowledged that the current status quo was unacceptable, but while up to now that qualification always referred to the dilemma of either negotiations or status quo, we now risk entering a protracted stage of negotiations *and* status quo.

12. Before broaching the question of what could be done to remedy this, my Personal Envoy would like to make the following brief comments on the elements of the second meeting that were not directly related to the proposals of the two parties. In order to forestall an endless repetition of the parties' expostulations on their own proposals and at the same time contribute to the development of an atmosphere of trust, the two presumably non-controversial subjects referred to in paragraph 7 above (natural resources and local administration), were added to the agenda of the second meeting. This was successful to a certain extent: the discussions went well and both parties actively participated in them; but it was generally realized that these technical issues could not take the place of the substantial negotiations aimed at a mutually acceptable political solution that resolution 1754 (2007) had called for.

13. Another presumably non-controversial item added to the agenda was that of confidence-building measures, referred to in paragraph 7 above. As this was only briefly deliberated in Manhasset, my Personal Envoy intends to raise the matter again during the next round so as to obtain greater clarity as to the positions of the parties. His own view, which I support, is that confidence-building measures are, by definition, intended to generate trust between parties in a conflict and cannot, therefore, be considered as going beyond the competence of a negotiation process that was set up at the request of the Security Council and was supposed to be conducted in good faith and to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

14. It will be clear, however, that the negotiation process pursuant to resolution 1754 (2007) cannot be completely filled with discussions that do not touch on the proposals of the parties. It is also clear that the parties will not start negotiating without some further guidance from the Security Council. The Council could clarify that attendance at each round of the negotiation process is not equivalent to entering into negotiations. Paragraph 2 of resolution 1754 (2007) contains elements that cannot be separated. A political solution that does justice to all those elements will inevitably be of great complexity and will need to be negotiated with perseverance.

15. To that end, my Personal Envoy has reminded the parties of the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". He is convinced that acceptance of this principle by the parties could be the key to the beginning of genuine negotiations, as it would encourage them to discuss proposals with elements that are unacceptable to them.

16. To begin with, the Frente Polisario might discuss the Moroccan proposal (S/2007/206) on the basis of its avowed willingness to accept autonomy as an option as long as independence is an option as well. The latter addition cannot, of course, be a precondition on which parties must agree before entering into such a discussion, but Morocco presumably has no interest in turning down the discussion simply because it is aware of the Frente Polisario's ultimate position. Conversely, Morocco must also be prepared to discuss the proposal of the Frente Polisario (S/2007/210). This seems more difficult because there is no symmetry between the proposals. A genuine discussion would offer the Frente Polisario an opportunity to explain how, by means of its concept of "post-referendum guarantees", arrangements on vital matters such as natural resources and security could be stipulated beforehand, thus avoiding the period of incertitude and unpredictability that normally accompanies the emergence of a newly independent State.

17. Even if Morocco may not be interested in the Frente Polisario's explanation, which presupposes openness to an independent Western Sahara, it will still have to participate in such a discussion if it wants to comply with resolution 1754 (2007). As to the practical meaning of that resolution for the treatment of the two proposals, my Personal Envoy has taken the line that both proposals are on the table. It is true that the resolution is more elaborate about the Moroccan proposal than about that of the Frente Polisario, but what matters in the end is that the Security Council has taken note of both proposals in the same resolution in which it has called upon parties to enter into negotiations. Consequently, both proposals are on the agenda and must be discussed.

IV. Activities on the ground

A. Military

18. As at 30 September 2007, the military component of MINURSO stood at 217 personnel, including administrative personnel and medical unit officers, against the authorized strength of 230. During the period under review, in an effort to increase the number of Arabic-speaking military observers, two military observers from Djibouti were deployed to the Mission on 17 April 2007. Despite continuing efforts to increase the number of female military observers from one officer, from Mongolia, at the time of my last report, only one additional woman officer, from Croatia, has been deployed to MINURSO during the reporting period. I would welcome a larger deployment of female officers by troop-contributing countries to MINURSO, both for operational reasons and in order to improve the Mission's gender balance.

19. The overall situation in the area of responsibility remained generally calm. Under the command of Major General Kurt Mosgaard (Denmark) and subsequently Major General Zhao Jingmin (China), the military component of MINURSO continued to monitor the ceasefire, which has been in effect since 6 September 1991, in accordance with military agreement No. 1 between the Royal Moroccan Army and MINURSO, on the one hand, and the Frente Polisario military forces and MINURSO, on the other. The military agreements divide Western Sahara into five areas, including a five-kilometre-wide buffer strip east of the berm, two restricted areas (25 kilometres east and 30 kilometres west of the berm, respectively) and two areas of limited restriction that encompass the remainder of Western Sahara. Differing restrictions on military activities and personnel apply in these areas.

20. During the period from 1 April to 30 September 2007, MINURSO performed 4,502 ground patrols and 296 air patrols to visit and inspect units of the Royal Moroccan Army and the military forces of the Frente Polisario and to monitor adherence to the military agreements.

21. MINURSO continued to enjoy good relations with both the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente Polisario armed forces. However, both sides continued to abstain from direct meetings and all known contact between the two parties was conducted via meetings and written communications, with MINURSO as an intermediary. The MINURSO proposal to establish a joint military verification commission (see S/2006/249, para. 11), designed to build confidence between the parties, has, in principle, been welcomed by the Frente Polisario, but the Royal Moroccan Army has not yet responded.

22. Violations of military agreement No. 1 by both parties remain at approximately the same level as in the previous reporting period. From 1 April to 30 September 2007, MINURSO observed and recorded 11 new violations by the Royal Moroccan Army and 12 new violations by the military forces of the Frente Polisario. Violations by the Royal Moroccan Army included the presence of a military helicopter in the restricted area on 29 May and 21 June 2007 without prior notification of MINURSO, the establishment of permanently occupied observation posts outside the perimeter of strong points in April, May and June 2007, and the presence of military elements inside the buffer strip. Violations by the Frente Polisario included a concentration of forces in the area of limited restriction in

Mijek from 19 to 21 May 2007 during military parades to celebrate the beginning of the armed struggle against Spain in 1973, the presence of military elements inside the buffer strip and the presence since January 2007 of an observation post inside the buffer strip in the area of responsibility of team site Bir Lahlou. Following repeated interventions by MINURSO, the observation post was dismantled on 10 June 2007.

23. In May and June 2007, MINURSO received requests from the Royal Moroccan Army for agreement to construct new ammunition stores in its area of responsibility, to replace structures that had deteriorated beyond repair. MINURSO granted permission for the construction to proceed on condition that the old structures were demolished. MINURSO will monitor the removal of the old structures.

24. MINURSO continued to observe long-standing violations by both parties. These included the presence of radar equipment and improvements to defence infrastructure by the Royal Moroccan Army, and the continued deployment of military personnel by the Frente Polisario in the area known as the "Spanish Fort". However, no further changes to the infrastructure of the Spanish Fort have taken place since my previous report to the Security Council (see S/2007/202, para. 18).

25. During the reporting period, the Royal Moroccan Army significantly increased the number of allegations of violations of military agreement No. 1 by the Frente Polisario that it submitted to MINURSO. Since 26 May 2007, the Royal Moroccan Army has registered 32 allegations of the presence of people and vehicles inside the buffer strip. Almost all such allegations were made hours, if not days, after the alleged sightings. Consequently, MINURSO military observers had no means of verifying whether the allegations were well-founded. However, in most cases, civilians were believed to be the subject of such complaints. As military agreement No. 1 does not prohibit the presence of civilians in the buffer strip, the majority of these allegations were believed to be groundless. In three instances, MINURSO was able to confirm the presence of Frente Polisario military elements in the buffer strip and these were recorded as violations of military agreement No. 1. In response to each of four allegations during June, the MINURSO team site commander wrote to the Royal Moroccan Army subsector commander, clarifying that the provisions of the military agreements do not apply to civilians. Since then, the instances of such allegations have decreased.

26. During the reporting period, two allegations against the Royal Moroccan Army were submitted to MINURSO by the Frente Polisario. Both allegations pertained to the presence of military aircraft flying over the area of Agwanit on 20 and 26 May 2007. Owing to insufficient information and the lack of technical aerial surveillance equipment, MINURSO could neither confirm nor refute these allegations.

27. As explained in previous reports to the Council (S/2006/817, para. 26 and S/2007/202, para. 19), since the start of the Mission's mandate, both parties have imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement of MINURSO military observers. The restrictions primarily relate to the denial of entry into the parties' strong points and units to verify unit strength, weapons systems and maintenance of the status quo. On 1 June 2006, MINURSO began recording restrictions on freedom of movement of military observers as violations of military agreement No. 1. Despite agreement by the Frente Polisario to lift all restrictions, only one military region (military region 2 in Tifariti) has granted MINURSO military observers full freedom of movement. In addition, two other military regions (military region 3 in Mijek and

military region 4 in Mehaires) have, to a large extent, honoured their obligations in this regard, with only two freedom of movement violations being committed in Mijek and one such violation in Mehaires during the reporting period. The Frente Polisario has yet to grant full freedom of movement in the remaining three military regions. With regard to the Royal Moroccan Army, MINURSO continues to enjoy full freedom of movement in the Awsard subsector, as was indicated in my previous report (S/2007/202, para. 19), but restrictions remain in place in all other subsectors. During the period from 1 April to 30 September 2007, 424 freedom of movement violations were recorded on the part of the Royal Moroccan Army and 158 on the part of the Frente Polisario. The greater numbers of Royal Moroccan Army strong points and units explain, to some extent, the higher number of violations on its part. The Royal Moroccan Army continues to refer to ambiguous wording of military agreement No. 1 as the explanation for its continued violations of the principle of unrestricted freedom of movement. However, further improvements are necessary from both sides to enable MINURSO to carry out its monitoring functions more effectively.

28. With regard to military agreements Nos. 2 and 3, both parties continued to extend cooperation to MINURSO in the marking and disposal of mines, unexploded ordnance and expired ammunition. During the period under review, MINURSO discovered and marked 270 mines, pieces of unexploded ordnance and dangerous areas. MINURSO monitored the destruction by both parties of a total of 15,494 such devices, including abandoned, obsolete and stockpiled munitions.

29. As explained in my previous report (S/2007/202, para. 21), the abundant presence of mines and unexploded ordnance throughout Western Sahara, including areas where MINURSO military observers and logistical vehicles operate on a daily basis, is a cause for serious concern. Since 1991, MINURSO military observers have been the victims of three mine accidents and the introduction of night operations has increased the risk of further accidents. This raises force protection issues that need to be addressed by MINURSO through the implementation of mine action and unexploded ordnance disposal activities, which are essential to provide an adequate level of safety to United Nations personnel working in Western Sahara. To improve the safety and security of United Nations military observers in the field, MINURSO plans to equip new patrol vehicles with adequate protective equipment, including mine detectors, mine shoes and safety foot markings. This equipment will also facilitate a more rapid response to mine accidents during patrols and provide safe passage through minefields to evacuate injured personnel. Provision for these requirements, in the amount of $279,400, will be requested in the 2008/09 MINURSO budget.

30. The safety of the local population is also at continued risk. The number of casualties is likely to increase in the event that refugees begin to return. In an effort to respond to this threat, and as previously reported to the Council (S/2007/202, para. 22), on 15 January 2007, the Royal Moroccan Army began a comprehensive mine clearance operation in Western Sahara, focusing on the areas that are most at risk. With the onset of high temperatures, the operation was suspended for three months in July 2007 and will resume in October. Since the beginning of this major operation, the Royal Moroccan Army has reportedly found and destroyed more than 700 pieces of unexploded ordnance and mines.

31. For its part, MINURSO continues to emphasize the need to reduce the risk of mines and unexploded ordnance. Through its Mine Action Cell, which was established in January 2006, MINURSO is engaged in mine action coordination through several complementary avenues of cooperation. With support from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the Mission has organized activities to reduce the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance and to raise awareness of the issue with the parties and among the wider population in the Territory and in the Tindouf refugee camps. MINURSO is also in contact with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Mauritania to exchange information and facilitate mine clearance activities in the boundary area between the Territory and Mauritania and to initiate regional mine awareness programmes.

32. In order to have the capacity to cooperate more fully with mine-clearing non-governmental organizations in the Territory, the staff of the MINURSO Mine Action Centre and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) cell have been trained in the use of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database system introduced by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. To date, the MINURSO Mine Action Centre has been staffed with two military officers. The work is highly specialized and requires both knowledge and field experience. If MINURSO capacities in this regard are to be preserved, the services of a senior mine action adviser will be required to supplement the work of individual United Nations military observers, whose tours of duty last only 6 to 12 months. Provision for such services in the amount of $120,000 will be requested in the 2008-2009 MINURSO budget. Such services will enable MINURSO to retain the institutional memory and technical expertise that is vital to this work.

33. As previously reported to the Council, (S/2007/202, para. 25) Landmine Action, a non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom, embarked in August 2006 on a comprehensive mine and unexploded ordnance survey, as well as clearance of areas east of the berm, with cooperative support from UNMAS and MINURSO. This work continues and, as of 30 September 2007, Landmine Action had surveyed 49 designated dangerous areas and marked 267 spots indicating the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, recovered 114 pieces of unexploded ordnance and mines from the field and carried out 177 demolition tasks. In addition, Landmine Action surveyed 55 areas previously marked by the Frente Polisario and found no evidence of mines or unexploded ordnance.

34. Landmine Action activities have been substantially funded by UNMAS since August 2006, with the shortfall being met by the Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and the Governments of Germany and Norway. It will be proposed in the 2008-2009 budget that MINURSO funds be made available to ensure the verification of MINURSO patrol and logistical supply routes and the mine and unexploded ordnance clearance of areas where MINURSO needs to establish facilities. In addition, the United Nations Mine Action Service will shortly provide a new grant to Landmine Action with funding from Austria, Italy, Japan, the Holy See and the Netherlands, which will allow Landmine Action to continue working on this important project until mid-2008. I wish to thank donors for their support. In order to secure the continuation of the comprehensive mine action programme east of the berm until the end of 2008, additional donor funding will be required. I call upon donors to contribute generously to the mine clearance activities of Landmine Action, which are essential to providing a safe environment for the local population and for United Nations military and civilian personnel in Western Sahara.

35. MINURSO undertook several activities during the reporting period to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and to improve its military capabilities, including the marking of tracks, the improvement of casualty evacuation procedures and the production of more accurate maps. As previously reported to the Council, MINURSO established a GIS cell in June 2006 (see S/2006/817, para. 29), with technical and training support and advice from the Cartographic Section of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, to address the risks attendant on using outdated large-scale aerial maps (see S/2007/202, para. 27). The GIS cell is now staffed by two military observers and one United Nations Volunteer GIS specialist. During the reporting period, the cell produced the second set of updated operational and thematic maps of critical areas for the Mission headquarters and, in greater detail, for each team site's area of responsibility. The Mission continues to enhance these maps utilizing satellite imagery and data from Global Positioning System equipment in MINURSO vehicles, as well as other available data. The cell is also responsible for the field training of all MINURSO personnel on all aspects of GIS, including Global Positioning Systems and appropriate software. The GIS cell has enhanced the capability of the Mission and supports military and civilian personnel in decision-making during operations by providing the most accurate geographical information available. GIS has effectively reduced the probability of mine accidents for team site patrols and for civilian logistical vehicles travelling in the MINURSO area of responsibility. It has also shortened the data-updating cycle for the Mission's geographical information and facilitated the production of more accurate maps for operations.

36. In order to improve force protection and the safety of military observers during night activities and during casualty evacuation operations, the Mission plans to equip patrols in the field with additional portable satellite telephones. This allocation will complement the radio network and significantly increase the efficiency of communications in cases of emergency.

B. Prisoners of war, other detainees and persons unaccounted for

37. The International Committee of the Red Cross continues to work with the concerned parties and families of the persons still unaccounted for in relation to the conflict.

C. Assistance to Western Saharan refugees

38. The humanitarian activities of the international community, led by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), on behalf of Western Saharan refugees continue to be conducted in a challenging environment. The food pipeline remains fragile and delays in shipping have caused disruption to food aid delivery. Cereals, which constitute 70 per cent of the current food basket, were not distributed in the month of July. In the coming six months, shortfalls of cereals, pulses and high-energy biscuits are expected. The absence of secure food stocks since October 2006 continues to be a major concern.

39. The supplementary feeding programme resumed in July 2007 in follow-up to the recommendations of the 2007 joint nutrition assessment mission (S/2007/202,

para. 31). Supplementary rations were distributed to pregnant and lactating women, and to malnourished children under five years of age to address chronic malnutrition and anaemia among those particularly vulnerable groups. In addition, an amount of $300,000 was allocated by UNHCR for the provision of fresh vegetables, meat and fruit, as a measure aimed at diversifying the diet of the refugees during the month of Ramadan.

40. In pursuance of its objective of ensuring the provision of safer water, UNHCR is working towards the withdrawal of water tankers from the camps and their replacement by water-pipe networks. A project to establish such a network is scheduled to be completed in Awsard camp by the end of 2007.

41. The education sector continues to benefit from UNHCR support. A significant quantity of school books was provided in time for the current academic year. However, all the needs in this sector are still not being met. A series of training activities has been conducted on various matters, including gender, HIV awareness and human rights. In addition, a project for the creation of a legal library with Internet connection has been finalized, but the necessary funding is yet to be secured.

42. In March 2007, the United Nations presence was strengthened by the establishment of a World Health Organization (WHO) office in Tindouf in order to strengthen the efforts to prevent major diseases in the camps.

D. Confidence-building measures

43. I am pleased to report that the UNHCR-led confidence-building measures programme continues to be successfully implemented in close coordination with MINURSO and in cooperation with the parties concerned. UNHCR is currently exploring with the parties the possibility of expanding the programme in order to allow more beneficiaries to take advantage of these humanitarian activities.

44. From the start of the programme in November 2004 to 14 September 2007, 4,423 Western Saharans benefited from the exchange of family visits, 55 per cent of them women, and 35 per cent children under the age of 18; 2,116 persons travelled to the refugee camps near Tindouf and 2,307 travelled to cities in the Territory. With the aim of expanding and increasing the number of beneficiaries and the length of the visits, UNHCR is currently assessing with the parties the possibility of organizing visits using land transportation. It is expected that implementation of such operations would have a significant impact both by increasing the numbers of individuals able to travel and also by possibly reducing the transportation costs involved in the visits. Further, UNHCR is planning a new round of registration of beneficiaries to allow more eligible persons to register for these visits.

45. The free-of-charge telephone service between the refugee camps in Tindouf and the Territory is operating successfully. Since the service began in January 2004 until the end of September 2007, over 83,675 telephone calls were made, 58 per cent of which were placed by women. As previously reported to the Council (see S/2006/202, para. 34), budgetary constraints and the logistical difficulties attendant on its remote location had prevented the establishment of a telephone centre in Dakhla camp, some 180 kilometres from Tindouf. I am pleased to report that UNHCR, with support from MINURSO, is completing the installation of a

telephone centre in Dakhla camp. It is due to become operational by the end of 2007.

46. In August 2007, UNHCR reached an agreement with the parties to organize the first seminar under the programme of confidence-building measures, which is to take place in November 2007, in Madeira, Portugal. The subject of the seminar is "Hassania culture, traditional heritage and practice", and has been agreed upon by the parties in conjunction with UNHCR. By agreement with the parties, UNHCR and MINURSO will select 17 Western Saharans from the refugee camps and 17 from the Territory to participate in the seminar.

47. As explained in my previous report (see S/2007/202, para. 35), MINURSO continues to play an important role in supporting the imp'ementation of the programme of confidence-building measures. Pursuant to a memorandum of understanding signed between UNHCR and MINURSO, MINURSO provides aircraft, personnel and ground transportation for the programme. United Nations police officers facilitate airport procedures at arrival and departure points and accompany UNHCR staff on their visits to beneficiaries. In addition, a doctor or a nurse from the Malaysian medical unit of MINURSO accompanies each flight. MINURSO also continues to provide critical logistical, security and administrative support to UNHCR in the implementation of the programme.

48. The confidence-building measures programme depends entirely on funding from donors. Despite the positive momentum experienced in recent months and the parties' agreement to plans for its expansion, without more funds the continuation of the programme, even at its current level of activity, is at risk. On 15 October, with support from my Special Representative, UNHCR launched an appeal for funding for the confidence-building measures programme. Without an immediate response from donors, UNHCR may be forced to discontinue the exchange of family visits programme at the end of October 2007. I am of the view that, particularly at this critical juncture in negotiations between the parties, confidence-building measures provide a vital avenue for dialogue, in addition to providing a lifeline for contact between the separated families of Western Sahara. I strongly urge the donor community to support this important humanitarian programme, so that it may continue and expand during 2007 and 2008. Furthermore, I urge the parties to continue to cooperate with UNHCR and to facilitate its activities on behalf of Western Saharans.

E. Irregular migrants

49. By 8 February 2007, only seven migrants remained in Bir Lahlou, including four migrants from Ghana and one each from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Gambia. During the first week of April 2007, one of the remaining migrants returned to Gambia with the support of his brother, who had travelled to Bir Lahlou, facilitated by the Gambian and Mauritanian authorities. Only six migrants now remain in Bir Lahlou. Following their recent request for assistance to return home, MINURSO has made contact with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Assisted by MINURSO, IOM has facilitated the return of migrants from Western Sahara as reported previously (S/2006/817, para. 43 and S/2007/202, para. 37) and steps are being taken to coordinate efforts so that these remaining migrants can return safely to their countries of origin.

50. Throughout the reporting period, Moroccan media sources reported that the Moroccan authorities continued to intercept irregular migrants found in the Territory. On 31 July 2007, the same sources reported that two migrants had been killed and two others seriously injured while attempting to break through a security surveillance system in Laayoune. I call upon all concerned to cooperate in upholding their humanitarian obligations towards migrants, wherever they may be located.

F. Human rights

51. Throughout May 2007, Western Saharan students from the Territory attending universities in Morocco reportedly engaged in demonstrations for the right to self-determination and independence for Western Sahara. Western Saharan students at the University of Agadir held a demonstration on 7 May 2007 and the Moroccan authorities reportedly used force to break up the demonstration. This event sparked demonstrations and sit-ins by Western Saharan students at universities in Casablanca, Marrakesh and Rabat, in protest at the response of the authorities in Agadir and calling for the right to self-determination. Reports indicate that the response by Moroccan authorities resulted in a number of students being injured, some seriously, and arrests followed. Moroccan media sources confirmed the student unrest, characterizing it as violent clashes between students that led to police intervention to stop violence between rival gangs of students. Mohamed Abdelaziz, Secretary General of the Frente Polisario, wrote to me four times in May, once in June, twice in July, once in August and twice in September 2007 to protest the arrests and "repression" of Western Saharans, including students attending Moroccan universities, and to draw my attention to hunger strikes allegedly undertaken by Western Saharan students in detention in Moroccan prisons.

52. During the period prior to the talks between the parties, international media sources reported the alleged harassment and arrest of Western Saharan human rights activists by Moroccan authorities in the Territory. Throughout the period under review, Western Saharan human rights activists reportedly received heavy prison sentences.

53. As previously reported to the Council (see S/2006/249, para. 3), clashes between Western Saharan demonstrators and Moroccan police in October 2005 resulted in the death of Hamdi Lembarki, a 24-year-old Western Saharan, in Laayoune on 30 October 2005. Following an investigation by Moroccan authorities, two police officers were sentenced in June 2007 to 10 years in prison in connection with this crime, on charges of inflicting injuries with a weapon and unintentionally causing death while acting in the capacity of public employees.

G. Administration of the Mission

54. Security work on all the team sites east of the berm, and in team site Smara west of the berm, has been completed. This brings six of the nine MINURSO team sites into compliance with minimum operating security standards, walls, boom-gates and security lighting having been installed. In addition, protective bastions will be placed around the walls. Work is progressing on the remaining three team sites west of the berm. Observation towers and underground shelters have been installed at one

team site (Awsard) and work is ongoing at three others. Work at the remaining team sites will be completed within the next budget year. In Laayoune, there has been improvement recently in communication and cooperation between the local authorities and MINURSO on the work required to bring the Mission headquarters and logistics base into compliance with minimum operating security standards. This work is expected to be resumed in the near future. In Tindouf work is progressing on the installation of a boom-gate and of security lighting.

55. In addition to work on security measures, facility and infrastructure improvements are also under way and there are plans to replace the soft-walled accommodation structures at team sites with three modular hard-wall structures in five team sites. In order to ensure that the quality of water, which is supplied in bulk to the team sites, is of an acceptable hygiene standard, the Mission has requested purification plants, which will be installed at five team sites and at the Mission headquarters.

56. The Mission has adopted a plan for the rehabilitation of airstrips and work has begun. One airstrip (Oum Dreyga) was brought back into operation in August. Work on another two airstrips (Mahbas and Awsard) continues. MINURSO invited bids from outside contractors for this work, but the bids received were significantly in excess of cost estimates from internal studies using standard market prices. Accordingly, local material and contracted equipment are being used, and the work is being carried out by MINURSO personnel, with a consequent saving of some 70 per cent of the nearest price quoted by an outside contractor. Provided that other machinery can be obtained locally or from the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy, the rehabilitation of the remaining four desert airfields should be completed by mid-2008, with similar cost savings. The plan is designed to accommodate the operational needs of the Mission, so that staff movements, the delivery of fresh food and casualty and medical evacuation support are not affected. Non-perishables will be supplied temporarily by means of ground transportation while work continues on the airstrips.

57. As part of the 2007-2008 budget, one international post was downgraded from the P-4 to the P-3 level to reflect changing responsibilities more accurately. In addition, one international post was converted to the local staff category. This brings to a close the implementation of the recommendations of a civilian management review conducted in 2005 (see S/2005/648 and S/2006/817). The cost saving that resulted from this restructuring has allowed for the introduction of the posts of Conduct and Discipline Officer, Budget Officer, Training Officer and Geographic Information Systems Officer, while the number of authorized international staff has still been reduced by 30 in the 2006-2007 budget.

H. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

58. In its resolution 1754 (2007), the Council requested that the necessary measures continue to be put in place to ensure that MINURSO achieves compliance with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. In the past six months, one alleged case of sexual exploitation and abuse was reported and appropriate measures were taken within the regulations to deal with the matter. A compulsory comprehensive training programme on the standards of conduct expected of all Mission personnel has begun and a welfare programme has been

developed to compensate to the extent possible for the difficult living conditions associated with the particular environment in which MINURSO operates.

V. African Union

59. The observer delegation of the African Union to MINURSO, led by its Senior Representative, Yilma Tadesse (Ethiopia), continued, during the reporting period, to provide support and cooperation to the Mission. I wish to reiterate my appreciation to the African Union for its contribution.

VI. Financial aspects

60. The General Assembly, by its resolution 61/290 of 29 June 2007, appropriated the amount of $44.3 million for the maintenance of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008. Therefore, should the Security Council approve my recommendation set out in paragraph 68 below with respect to the extension of the mandate of MINURSO, the cost for the maintenance of the Mission during the extension period will be limited to resources approved by the General Assembly.

61. As at 30 June 2007, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for MINURSO amounted to $47.3 million. As a result of the outstanding assessed contributions, the Organization has not been in a position to reimburse the Governments providing troops for the troop costs incurred since April 2002. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at 30 June 2007 amounted to $1,417.6 million.

VII. Observations and recommendations

62. I share the view of my Personal Envoy that the launch of the process of negotiations with the two first meetings, held in June and August 2007 respectively, is a cause for satisfaction. However, I recommend that the Security Council reiterate its call upon the parties, Morocco and the Frente Polisario, to enter into genuine negotiations, thus ensuring a more substantial implementation of its resolution 1754 (2007).

63. In contrast to my recent reports to the Council, I note that during this reporting period there has not been a decrease in the number of violations of military agreement No. 1, which defines the ceasefire regime. Moreover, I remain concerned that restrictions have continued on the freedom of movement of United Nations military observers who seek to visit units, headquarters and strong points for verification purposes. It is the responsibility of the parties to ensure that violations are not committed by their military/security forces, and I would encourage the parties to adhere more fully to the provisions of the military agreements and to extend their full cooperation to MINURSO in order fully to maintain the ceasefire and to ensure that basic peacekeeping principles are upheld.

64. I welcome the continued efforts of the parties to clear the Territory of mines and unexploded ordnance, and their related cooperation with MINURSO. I also welcome the increased support of MINURSO in the area of mine-risk education and its intention to provide victim assistance as required. As previously noted

(S/2007/202, para. 50), these activities could prove valuable and relatively inexpensive multipliers in the security and effectiveness of the Mission and have a direct positive effect on the safety of United Nations personnel. Such activities also raise awareness and understanding of the role and presence of MINURSO among the local population. These ongoing and operational activities are part of the core mandate of MINURSO, and cannot be funded totally through voluntary contributions. Therefore, MINURSO intends to make provisions, in the amount of $430,000, for mine-action activities in its 2008/09 budget for this vital work.

65. As previously noted (S/2007/202, para. 49), I would encourage the parties to work with MINURSO to establish direct cooperation and communication through a joint military verification commission and other forums to facilitate their work on mine clearance and other issues of common interest.

66. The human dimension of the conflict, including the plight of the Western Saharan refugees, is a continuing concern. In this context, I am pleased that the exchanges of family visits between the Territory and the refugee camps in the Tindouf area have continued without interruption during the reporting period. I am encouraged that the parties have also agreed in principle to the expansion of the programme, and that seminars and a new round of registration will take place in the months ahead. I urge the international community to show its support to the expansion of the confidence-building measures programme. I am also concerned that this valuable humanitarian confidence-building measure is at risk and may have to be suspended if additional financial support is not forthcoming in the immediate future and I urge the donor community to contribute to it generously.

67. I would like to repeat my call (S/2006/817, para. 60 and S/2007/202, para. 52) to the parties to remain engaged in continuous and constructive dialogue with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a view to ensuring respect for the human rights of the people of Western Sahara. I would like to reiterate that, although MINURSO does not have the mandate or resources to address this issue, the United Nations remains committed to upholding international human rights standards.

68. In the existing circumstances on the ground, and in the light of my Personal Envoy's continuing efforts, I believe that the presence of MINURSO remains indispensable for the maintenance of the ceasefire in Western Sahara. Therefore, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MINURSO for a further period of six months, until 30 April 2008.

69. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my Personal Envoy, Peter van Walsum, for his continuing efforts in search of a solution to the question of Western Sahara. On 10 September 2007, Major General Kurt Mosgaard (Denmark) handed over his responsibilities as Force Commander to Major General Jingmin Zhao (China). I wish to thank Major General Mosgaard for his hard work and dedication during his tenure as Force Commander and to wish Major General Zhao every success in his new assignment. I also wish to thank my Special Representative, Julian Harston, and the men and women serving in MINURSO for the manner in which they have discharged, under difficult conditions, the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Security Council.

Annex I

[Original: English and French]

Communiqué of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara (in agreement with the parties)

Meeting at Manhasset (Greentree Estate)

11 August 2007

Representatives of Morocco and the Frente Polisario met in Manhasset, New York, at the Greentree Estate, on 10 and 11 August 2007, continuing their discussions under the auspices of the Secretary-General and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) of 30 April 2007. Representatives of the neighbouring countries, Algeria and Mauritania, were also present at the opening and closing sessions and were consulted separately during the talks.

I am pleased that we were able to hold substantive talks in which the parties interacted with one another and expressed their views. A debate took place with regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). Also, at my initiative, the parties heard presentations by United Nations experts on specific issues, such as natural resources and local administration. Confidence-building measures were also proposed for discussion.

The parties acknowledge that the current status quo is unacceptable and they have committed to continue these negotiations in good faith. They have agreed that the process of negotiations will continue and that appropriate consultations will be completed regarding the date and venue of the coming round.

Annex II

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Contributions as at 15 September 2007

Country	*Military Observers*[a]	*Troops*[a]	*Civilian Police*[b]	*Total*
Argentina	1	0	0	1
Austria	2	0	0	2
Bangladesh	8	0	0	8
China	12	0	0	12
Croatia	7	0	0	7
Denmark	1	0	0	1
Djibouti	2	0	0	2
Egypt	23	0	3	26
El Salvador	6	0	3	9
France	15	0	0	15
Ghana	16	0	0	16
Greece	1	0	0	1
Guinea	5	0	0	5
Honduras	12	0	0	12
Hungary	7	0	0	7
Ireland	3	0	0	3
Italy	5	0	0	5
Kenya	5	0	0	5
Malaysia	12	20	0	32
Mongolia	3	0	0	3
Nigeria	7	0	0	7
Pakistan	7	0	0	7
Poland	1	0	0	1
Russian Federation	24	0	0	24
Sri Lanka	2	0	0	2
Uruguay	8	0	0	8
Yemen	6	0	0	6
Total	**201**	**20**	**6**	**227**

[a] Authorized strength is 231, including the Force Commander.

[b] Authorized strength is 6.

Map No. 3691 Rev. 55 UNITED NATIONS
October 2007

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

United Nations A/62/495–S/2007/620

General Assembly
Security Council

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19 October 2007
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Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Agenda item 17
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Identical letters dated 18 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On the instructions of my Government, I transmit to you herewith a statistical summary of Israeli violations from 8 to 14 October 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 17, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nawaf **Salam**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

07-55506 (E) 221007 221007

Annex to the identical letters dated 18 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Subject: Israeli violations, acts of aggression and other activities from 8 to 14 October 2007 inclusive

Air violations

On 8 October 2007, at 1030 hours, enemy Israeli military aircraft were heard over Jabal al-Baruk (in the area of the radar installation). A parachute carrying a foreign object of unknown nature was seen in the Bekaa area. It landed behind the radar installation at the foot of Jabal al-Baruk on the Shuf side.

Between 1034 hours and 1205 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Rumaysh in a northerly direction and circled over the North, the Bekaa, Beirut and the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over al-Naqurah.

Between 1034 hours and 1205 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Rumaysh in a northerly direction and circled over the North, the Bekaa, Beirut and the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over al-Naqurah.

Between 1849 hours and 2015 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah and circled over Beirut. It then departed Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah.

On 9 October 2007, between 1030 hours and 1120 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over the sea off Tyre in an easterly direction as far as the Mar`ayun area and circled over the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b.

Between 1430 hours and 1505 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b in a northerly direction as far as Tyre and circled over the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b.

On 10 October 2007, between 1120 hours and 1235 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Kafr Kila and circled over Shikka, al-Harmal and the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b.

Between 2300 hours and 2355 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace over the sea off Sidon and circled over Sidon and Beirut. It then left Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah.

On 11 October 2007, between 0057 and 0235 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Kafr Kila and circled over Jubayl and the South. They then left Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b.

Between 1015 hours and 1120 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Rumaysh and circled over all southern regions. They then left Lebanese airspace over `Alma al-Sha`b.

On 12 October 2007, between 1348 hours and 1510 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over Dayr Mimas in a northerly direction and circled over all southern regions. They then left Lebanese airspace over Rumaysh.

Between 2114 hours and 2320 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah in a northerly direction and circled over the sea off Beirut. It then left Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah.

On 14 October 2007, between 1330 hours and 1520 hours, two enemy Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace over al-Naqurah and circled over Jubayl and the southern regions. They then left Lebanese airspace over 'Alma al-Sha'b.

Between 2002 hours and 2150 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace over the sea off Tyre and circled over the sea between Beirut and the South. It then left Lebanese airspace over the sea off al-Naqurah.

Sea violations

None.

Acts of aggression in the field

On 8 October 2007, between 1925 and 2000 hours, the Israeli enemy shone a searchlight from its Zarit barracks position towards the Mirwahin-Jabal Balat-Ramiyah triangle.

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Sixty-second session
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General debate

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Letter dated 17 October 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you in connection with the letter of the distinguished Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, John Mourikis, addressed to you and circulated, at his request, as document A/62/470-S/2007/592 on 5 October 2007.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall that, although the Security Council, in its resolution 817 (1993), concluded that the Republic of Macedonia fulfilled all the criteria for membership in the United Nations laid down in Article 4 of the Charter, it imposed an unprecedented additional condition for membership, namely, that the State would be provisionally referred to as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" pending settlement of the difference that had arisen over the name. Even though Macedonian authorities were aware that such an additional condition ran contrary to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of May 1948 (endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 197 (III)), ever since the discussions started, we have been demonstrating strong commitment to engage constructively and in good faith in the talks with Greece to settle the difference over the name. May I recall at this point that we have made a number of concessions, all in the spirit of good-neighbourly relations. Furthermore, we openly stated that we found the last proposal made by your Personal Envoy, Matthew Nimetz, a good basis for a settlement.

It is in this context that I wish to reiterate once again the readiness of the Republic of Macedonia to discuss further the so-called double formula solution. In the light of the fact that the issue is primarily of a bilateral nature, this implies that, together with Greece, we should work on finding an acceptable compromise formula for our bilateral relations.

I would like to assure you that the Republic of Macedonia will continue to uphold the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and that advancement of cooperation and good-neighbourliness will remain among the top priority issues on our foreign policy agenda.

07-55493 (E) 221007

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the present letter to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8, of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Goran **Stevcevski**
Chargé d' affaires a.i.

United Nations S/2007/622

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 October 2007

Original: English

Letter dated 17 October 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), established on 27 February 2004 pursuant to Security Council resolution 1528 (2004), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), established on 30 November 1999 pursuant to Security Council resolution 1279 (1999), and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), established on 19 September 2003 pursuant to Security Council resolution 1509 (2003).

Following the usual consultations, it is my intention to appoint:

- Ellen Margrethe Løj (Denmark) as my Special Representative for Liberia. Ms. Løj will replace Alan Doss. Ms. Løj has previously served as Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations and as Representative of Denmark on the Security Council, as well as Chairperson of its Sanctions Committee on Liberia
- Alan Doss (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mr. Doss, currently the Special Representative for Liberia, will replace William Lacy Swing (United States of America)
- Choi Young-Jin (Republic of Korea) as my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Choi, who has previously served as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, as well as Vice Foreign Minister of his country, has also served in the United Nations as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

The precise timing of their assignments will be finalized taking into account relevant factors in each case.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Schori, Mr. Swing and Mr. Doss for their remarkable contributions to the United Nations peace efforts in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, respectively.

I would be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

07-55679 (E) 231007

United Nations S/2007/623

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 October 2007

Original: English

Letter dated 19 October 2007 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letter dated 17 October 2007 (S/2007/622) concerning your intention to appoint Ellen Margrethe Løj (Denmark) as your Special Representative for Liberia, Alan Doss (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as your Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mr. Choi Young-Jin (Republic of Korea) as your Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council. They take note of the intention expressed in your letter.

(*Signed*) Leslie Kojo **Christian**
President of the Security Council

07-55728 (E) 231007

United Nations S/2007/624

Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1590 (2005), in which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, respect for the ceasefire and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations in the Sudan. The report provides an assessment of the overall situation in the country since my previous report to the Council, dated 20 August 2007 (S/2007/500), as well as an update on the activities of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and recommendation for extension of the Mission's mandate, which expires on 31 October 2007.

II. Implementation of the major elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

2. The parties did not make significant progress during the period under review on the major outstanding issues of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, namely, the status of Abyei, demarcation of the 1956 border between northern and southern Sudan, completion of the security arrangements and preparations for elections. Legislation required for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement also did not make progress, as the National Assembly remained in recess for the holy month of Ramadan. At the same time, the security situation remained calm, but volatile. While a stand-off between the parties' armed forces at Muglad, Southern Kordofan, on 7 September was resolved peacefully, there has been increasing tension around the unresolved 1956 border.

3. The relationship between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has been further strained by the slow progress on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. During my visit to the Sudan from 3 to 6 September 2007, I appealed to both parties to resolve their differences on key outstanding issues, and stressed that the United Nations stood ready to assist them in this regard. However, as indicated later in the present report, on 11 October SPLM suspended its participation in the Government of National Unity, saying that its return would be conditional on progress on a list of issues of concern related to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. At the time of reporting, the parties were engaged in direct political

07-55192 (E) 231007

consultations at the highest level in an effort to resolve the impasse; however, a final outcome was still pending.

Security

4. While the overall security situation in the UNMIS area of operations remained generally calm and no major incidents were reported, there were signs of instability. In southern Sudan, scattered incidents of inter-ethnic violence were reported in Eastern Equatoria and Warrab States, as well as in Jonglei, where clashes in August between Murle and Nuer fighters reportedly left over 80 dead. Most incidents were linked to cattle rustling, private feuds and/or undisciplined acts by disgruntled soldiers.

5. On 7 September, former Popular Defence Forces of the Misseriya tribe who have aligned with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) were besieged by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in the town of Muglad, in Southern Kordofan. Escalating tensions were defused by the rapid intervention of the Ceasefire Political Commission, which issued a decision on 8 September giving the SPLA-aligned elements in Muglad seven days to withdraw to the south, and stipulating that they should move without their weapons, in civilian clothes, and only after obtaining prior permission from the SAF and SPLA. The same decision applied to another SPLA-aligned group of former members of the Popular Defence Forces in Abo Matarik (Southern Darfur). In order to enable monitoring and verification of the decision, the parties agreed to temporarily lift the restrictions on the freedom of movement UNMIS in sector VI, Abyei. However, the seven-day timeline given by the Ceasefire Political Commission was not met by the SPLA, which has officially advised the Ceasefire Political Commission that movement of these elements will not be possible until January 2008, owing to logistical constraints and the rainy season.

6. There was no significant further progress in the redeployment of the parties' armed forces since my 20 August report. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, SAF was required to complete redeployment of its forces north of the 1 January 1956 boundary by 9 July 2007. This process has yet to be completed. As at 15 October, 79.8 per cent of a total of over 46,000 SAF troops had been redeployed, of which 11.7 per cent were "voluntarily demobilized" soldiers who were still considered by SPLA to be active SAF forces. Under the terms of a July ruling by the Ceasefire Political Commission, SAF agreed to complete terminal payments to the "voluntarily demobilized" troops by the end of 2007, after which SPLA would accept them as redeployed. SAF acknowledges that approximately 3,600 SAF troops remain in southern Sudan, but claim that these forces are required to protect the oilfields, pending the full deployment of joint/integrated units. Meanwhile, 7.7 per cent of some 59,000 SPLA troops have been redeployed south of the approximate 1956 boundary. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, SPLA redeployment is to be completed within six months of the full formation of the joint/integrated units, which has not yet been achieved. SPLA columns have temporarily halted redeployment to facilitate proper monitoring and verification, since many troops had moved without prior notification. Meanwhile, SAF has indicated its objection to the redeployment of SPLA troops to assembly areas that it believes are north of the 1956 boundary. These issues have been referred to the Ceasefire Political Commission for its consideration.

demarcation process, with United Nations and donor support. Its final report is now expected in early 2008.

13. In the course of September and October, SPLM raised increasingly forceful objections to the slow pace of progress on a number of issues, in particular redeployment, oil revenue-sharing and preparations for the census and elections. On 10 September, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, opened the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly with a speech in which he warned of the risk of a return to conflict if progress on implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was not made. On 15 September, the Government of Southern Sudan invited the Abyei Boundary Commission to brief a wide range of southern Sudanese officials on the methodology of the Commission's original report, whose findings NCP had rejected in March 2006. On 27 September, the Government of Southern Sudan made public its own map of the territory of southern Sudan, based on the recommendations of an international consultant and including a provisional rendition of the 1956 boundary. These moves were criticized by NCP officials as unilateral.

14. Preparations for the national census, which is formally scheduled to take place from 4 to 16 February 2008, continued but attracted controversy. Census mapping, undertaken with the support of UNMIS and United Nations partners, reached 66 per cent coverage in southern Sudan and was expected to be completed by the end of November. However, insecurity and floods impeded the mapping process, and funding remained a major constraint. Delayed disbursement of the Government of National Unity commitment of $30 million for the period from June to September led to the deferment of activities, jeopardizing overall preparations. Differences over the census questionnaire resurfaced, with the parties divided over whether to include questions on ethnicity and religion.

15. The continued deadlock on these issues contributed to a general deterioration in relations between the parties, which was compounded by localized tensions after the police raided SPLM offices in Khartoum in mid-September, as part of a city-wide search for illegal weapons. SPLM reacted angrily, and tensions were defused only after senior NCP officials apologized for the incident.

16. On 11 October, following a week-long meeting of its Interim Political Bureau, SPLM announced that it had recalled its ministers, state ministers and presidential advisers from the Government of National Unity. Explaining the decision, SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum cited the lack of progress on the issues of Abyei, border demarcation, redeployment, transparency of oil revenues and preparations for the census and elections, and indicated that the ministers would resume participation in the Government of National Unity only after these issues had been resolved. SPLM also stated that NCP had encroached upon the constitutionally mandated powers of First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit, failing to consult on key decisions and withholding approval of a recommended reshuffle of SPLM ministers.

17. Reacting to the SPLM move, NCP stated to the press that the suspension was unjustified, since joint mechanisms already existed to tackle the outstanding issues on implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. NCP released several documents stating that SPLM and Government of Southern Sudan had also violated and delayed implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including by exceeding the mandated powers of the Government of Southern Sudan and by delaying its redeployment of forces.

18. On a positive note, the parties rapidly convened high-level political talks to address the crisis. At the time of reporting, the NCP and SPLM delegations remained engaged in intensive consultations, while the United Nations has offered its support if required.

19. Meanwhile, the National Assembly extended its summer recess until 22 October, to accommodate the holy month of Ramadan and the Eid al-Fitr holiday. A heavy legislative agenda is pending, much of it essential to preparing for national elections in 2009. While the National Constitutional Review Commission continued its consultations on a draft elections bill, differences reportedly remain over the form of the electoral system and the number of seats in the National Assembly and the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly. Depending on the electoral system, seats may be associated with subnational electoral circumscriptions whose boundaries are yet to be established.

20. During the reporting period, other commissions on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement continued work to reach agreement on plans for future activity. The Commission for the Protection of the Rights of non-Muslims in the National Capital met on 30 August and approved workplans for subcommittees, including on religious education. The National Civil Service Commission convened for the first time on 22 August and is establishing mechanisms to implement the CPA provision that 20 to 30 per cent of civil service posts should be allocated to southerners.

21. The Government of Southern Sudan continued to reorganize its institutions and strengthen its capacity. The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly reconvened for its fourth session on 10 September with a heavy legislative agenda, focused on the establishment of the rule of law and corrections. With the support of UNMIS and United Nations agencies, line ministries worked to develop their three-year budget plans, intended to ensure transparency and accountability of fiscal expenditure. The Third Interim National Council of SPLM met on 18 and 19 August and reviewed progress in the SPLM transformation from a liberation movement to a political party.

22. Several state legislatures made significant efforts to address issues of corruption and hold officials to account. Notably, Upper Nile State witnessed good cooperation between the NCP-led state government and the SPLM-dominated state assembly. In Central and Eastern Equatoria States, new *payam* (district) administrative units were created in an effort to improve grass-roots inclusion and service delivery. However, the pace of integration of the wartime SPLA administration into the new civil service remained slow. In addition, many local administrators are still not receiving regular salaries.

23. In Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, the incoming Governors took steps to establish their administrations. On the whole, the handover of power from NCP to SPLM in Blue Nile and from SPLM to NCP in Southern Kordofan was implemented peacefully. While the Nuba Mountains part of Southern Kordofan remained generally stable, insecurity in the western part of the state, which borders Southern Darfur, gave rise to concern. In Blue Nile State, on 23 September, Governor Malik Agar (SPLM) formally established the "Al Tadamon" locality designed by his NCP predecessor. The proposal had earlier met with strong opposition from the SPLM, which saw it as politically motivated. The new administrations in both States are now faced with taking forward implementation of the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement, as well as meeting the population's expectation of peace dividends in the form of stability, basic social services and economic development.

24. The parties continued to cooperate in sharing oil revenues during the reporting period. In September, the joint Government of National Unity-Government of Southern Sudan technical committee for oil revenue-sharing produced its most recent report on 2007 transfers to the Government of Southern Sudan and to the state level, including detailed calculations based on the production of oil from each commercial block. According to the report, the Government of Southern Sudan's share of oil revenues for the period from January to August 2007 totalled $810 million, resulting in actual transfers to the Government of Southern Sudan (after administrative and tax deductions) of $778 million. In the same period, transfers were made to the Sudan's oil-producing states, which according to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are entitled to a 2 per cent share in the proceeds of locally produced oil. Actual transfers to the state level for the period from January to August 2007 were reported as totalling $52.55 million, of which $24.7 million went to Unity State, $10 million to Upper Nile State and $17.8 million to Southern Kordofan State. Nonetheless, members of SPLM continued to complain about lack of transparency in monitoring and calculating the oil revenues.

III. Implementation of other peace processes in Sudan

25. Full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains at the core of sustainable peace in the Sudan. Lack of progress on implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement could therefore have a negative impact on other peace efforts in the country, including the situation in Darfur and eastern Sudan.

26. In Darfur, the security situation has continued to deteriorate, with heavy fighting between Government forces and rebel factions, but also clashes between rebel groups and inter-tribal violence, as well as ongoing banditry. The insecurity has exacerbated an already serious humanitarian situation and further hampered the work of humanitarian agencies.

27. In a very worrying development, unidentified armed elements launched a massive attack on the Southern Darfur group site in Haskanita of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) on 29 and 30 September. Ten AMIS personnel were killed and eight wounded while one is still missing. The attackers also looted 16 vehicles and a significant amount of weapons and ammunition.

28. On the political front in Darfur, preparations continued for peace talks scheduled to start in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on 27 October. The United Nations and the African Union held consultations with regional partners (Chad, Egypt, Eritrea and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) on 10 October on the key issues of participation and representation in the talks, and it was agreed that they should begin with a commitment by all parties to a cessation of hostilities, followed by a session on security arrangements. Meanwhile, SPLM hosted a meeting of non-signatory movements from 15 to 20 October to help prepare them for the upcoming negotiations, and rebel movements were scheduled to meet in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for pre-talks on 21 October.

29. In the meantime, UNMIS continued to provide assistance to AMIS under the support packages, while the two organizations are intensifying preparations for the

deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

30. After months of stagnation, the pace of implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement accelerated during the reporting period, following the return of the leaders of the Eastern Front to Khartoum on 27 August. Three Eastern Front representatives were sworn into their new positions in the Government of National Unity on 28 August, and a further eight will take their seats in the National Assembly when it reconvenes on 22 October. Eastern Front representatives also took up positions in the governments of the three eastern states, including the Deputy Governorships of Gadarif and Kassala. The allocation of development funds for eastern Sudan promised under the agreement is on hold, pending Eastern Front decisions on its priorities for spending. A high joint committee headed by Vice President Ali Osman Taha continues to monitor implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, including on plans for the incorporation of former Eastern Front fighters into SAF and the national police force. Concern remains, however, about the extent of grass-roots support for the Agreement.

31. Talks between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda are currently in recess to enable both parties to consult their respective stakeholders. In reaction to the movement of LRA fighters to the Garamba Park area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent months, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced on 9 September an agreement to flush out the LRA from the area unless peace was reached within 90 days. This announcement prompted LRA to threaten attacks in northern Uganda. My Special Envoy for the LRA-Affected Areas, Joaquim Chissano, continues to work closely with mediators of the Government of Southern Sudan and with regional Governments to help keep the Government of Uganda-LRA peace process on track. In a positive development, an LRA delegation travelled to Kampala on 4 October, the first visit to the Ugandan capital by LRA representatives since the group's insurgency began in 1987.

IV. Implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan

Political support and reconciliation

32. Full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement continues to require focused political support at the highest level. This was especially evident during the recent crisis in the Government of National Unity. During my visit to the Sudan, and in contacts with both parties in recent weeks, my Acting Special Representative and I have urged the parties to keep implementation of the Agreement on track, and stressed that the United Nations stands ready to offer additional assistance in resolving difficult issues.

33. UNMIS continued to engage local politicians and others to promote the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and defuse tensions that may arise. The "transitional areas" of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile present particular challenges, given the differences between the Comprehensive Peace Agreement parties and the lack of progress towards a solution. The Mission worked to engage the new governors in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, encouraging

cooperation. Meanwhile, as the Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee worked to complete its report on the critical 1956 boundary, United Nations border demarcation experts travelled to the Sudan to provide advice and agree on plans for further technical assistance to the Commission.

34. As tribal clashes claimed more lives in southern Sudan, UNMIS provided logistical support to the efforts of the Government of Southern Sudan to disarm and curb inter-ethnic violence in Warrab, Lakes and Jonglei States. The Southern Sudan Security Committee has since formulated a regional strategy for arms control and civilian protection. UNMIS is monitoring the situation closely and has established a policy advisory group on conflict and reconciliation to provide a coherent response to difficult situations in all sectors.

Military deployment and activities

35. As at 20 October, 97 per cent of the mandated military personnel (9,402 of a total of 9,706) were deployed in the UNMIS mission area, including 584 military observers, 282 staff officers and 8,536 troops.

36. The military component continued to facilitate implementation of the security protocol through the ceasefire structures at sector and force headquarters levels. The Ceasefire Joint Military Committee, chaired by the UNMIS Force Commander, continued to meet fortnightly, passing the milestone of its 60th meeting on 28 August. The regular convening of this body as a forum for dialogue and confidence-building between the parties' armed forces continued to contribute greatly to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Ceasefire Joint Military Committee addressed a number of key issues, including the redeployment of forces, verification of joint/integrated units and incorporation of other armed groups into SAF and SPLA.

37. Monitoring and verification activities were limited not only by the adverse road conditions during the rainy season, but also by the restrictions imposed by both parties in sector 6 (Abyei). It is hoped that the decision of the Ceasefire Political Commission to lift these restrictions for a period of one month to enable monitoring of the movement of SPLA "Debab Forces" south of the 1956 boundary will have a positive impact.

38. The military component of UNMIS also undertook humanitarian activities in support of local communities, including the improvement of schools; the provision of medical evacuation and care for civilians; the construction and grading of roads; the clearance of unexploded ordnance; and the care and treatment of livestock, which are vital for the local economy.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

39. The National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Coordination Council convened for the third time on 22 August, leading to provisional approval of a national strategic plan for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the Sudan. However, the plan has not yet received final approval, and disagreements between the parties remain on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the transitional areas and on the categories, criteria for eligibility and estimated numbers of the beneficiaries of the programme. The exclusion of the United Nations and donors in the National Disarmament, Demobilization and

Reintegration Coordination Council continued to hamper dialogue on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy and to cause substantial delays in critical decision-making on the programme in both northern and southern Sudan.

40. In a welcome demonstration of commitment to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the Government of Southern Sudan funded the registration of some 25,000 candidates identified by SPLA for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in 2007. UNMIS provided technical and logistical support to the southern Sudan institutions in olved. In addition, 227 children associated with SAF, SPLA and other armed groups have been registered in Blue Nile State. The progress of the registration effort helped re-energize the planning process in southern Sudan. However, the total number of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration candidates and target size for the SPLA has yet to be agreed by the leadership of the Government of Southern Sudan. The rightsizing of the army remains an issue of political choice.

Electoral assistance

41. UNMIS continued to engage with international partners on planning for electoral assistance, tracking preparations for the census and monitoring the progress of the draft elections law. Following on lessons learned from the pilot census, a national grassroots advocacy and information campaign has been proposed to create greater awareness of the rationale for the census and attendant methodologies, particularly among internally displaced communities. The Government of National Unity undertook to release all outstanding funds for the conduct of the census by the end of October.

42. Drafting of the elections law has reached an advanced stage, and should be ready for submission to Parliament when it reconvenes on 22 October. Meanwhile UNMIS continued its efforts to establish its electoral capacity. A Chief Electoral Officer and Chief of Operations have been recruited, while other technical posts for both southern Sudan and UNMIS headquarters in Khartoum are being filled. A joint mission by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services is planned immediately after the promulgation of the electoral law, aimed at providing a system-wide response to the operational, funding and capacity-building needs associated with its implementation, including the establishment of an electoral management body, the registration of voters and polling.

Police

43. During the reporting period, UNMIS conducted a strategic evaluation of its development work to date with the Southern Sudan Police Service. The evaluation identified key achievements, including close rapport with stakeholders at strategic and functional levels; significant progress in registration of Police Service personnel; introduction of community policing; release of illegal detainees; and development of standardized police training. Some 17 per cent of registered Police Service personnel have received basic training to date, in addition to the specialized training of four formed police units, which is a major step towards the target of the Police Service to take responsibility for law and order duties by December 2008. Upcoming priority areas include the expansion of training programmes, issuance of

police identity cards and development of the command, control and communication channels of the Police Service.

44. Following the success of the community policing initiative at Al Baraka internally displaced persons camp in Khartoum, joint community policing initiatives were established at Al Salaam and Wad Al Bashier camps in Omdurman locality and Dar Al Salam Camp in Jabal Auliya. UNMIS conducted training workshops in Al Salaam and Wad Al Bashier camps for 125 personnel. Community policing is also gathering momentum in southern Sudan with the formation of 3 new police-community relations committees in the Wau and Juba areas, bringing the number of committees to 11.

45. As at end September 2007, the United Nations police had provided training to 753 local police personnel. For the second phase of its training programme, 39 courses, including 3 basic training programmes, have been planned. In a special drive, the United Nations police delivered training in gender, child and vulnerable persons protection and also trained "peer educators" in HIV/AIDS awareness. The United Nations police also provided specialized forensics, ballistics, crime investigation training to police of the Government of Southern Sudan in Khartoum, and airport security. In a welcome development, the United Nations police were invited to conduct a training needs analysis in Northern and Blue Nile States. As at 9 October, the United Nations police had deployed 657 police advisers from 43 countries, representing 95 per cent of its authorized strength.

46. The UNMIS police priorities for the coming months include the commencement of basic police training, utilizing Southern Sudan Police Service trainers as well as training of 120 formed police unit personnel in the three southern sectors; the commencement of 24 hour a day/7 days a week patrols of Southern Sudan Police Service formed police units; an increase in the number of night collocation sites; an increase in the issuance of identity cards to the Southern Sudan Police Service; the introduction of command, control and communications reporting channels for the Southern Sudan Police Service; the initiation of the set-up of a police computer lab in Juba; the establishment of gender and vulnerable persons desks in each sector and the streamlining of collocation at the state headquarters of the Southern Sudan Police Service. Identifying and encouraging donors to fund basic requirements of the Southern Sudan Police Service and infrastructure development remain a priority for UNMIS police.

Human rights

47. UNMIS continued to provide technical support to the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan to enhance their human rights capacity, including workshops on human rights for Southern Sudan Police Service police officers and law enforcement policymakers. UNMIS also published seven promotional booklets on international human rights treaties for distribution to governmental institutions and civil society organizations in various parts of the country. The Mission organized workshops for Government officials, parliamentarians and civil society on the principles of fair trial, the reform of national legal provisions related to sexual offences, the process for ratification of the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

48. The Mission continued to monitor human rights violations in the Sudan, and received reports of increasing restrictions on journalists. The parties need to ensure that freedoms of expression and association are fully guaranteed by the authorities. Likewise, political parties should be allowed to operate without restriction and harassment. I would also urge the Sudan to ratify the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it signed earlier this year. Finally, it would be essential for both parties to complete the legislative process for the establishment of both the National Human Rights Commission and the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, in compliance with the Paris Principles.

Rule of law

49. As part of its support to the development of the Sudan prisons system, UNMIS launched a programme to mentor and train prison officers in southern Sudan. Seconded prisons officers are being deployed in several states in the south, where they will be co-located with and mentor southern Sudan prison officers. In Khartoum, UNMIS trained trainers in facilitation skills for prison officers, and provided comprehensive briefing on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to senior prison officials. On 23 September, a Prisons Development Committee was established, composed of the Director-General of the National Prisons Service, nine senior prison officers, UNMIS and UNDP. The Committee will monitor implementation of corrections reform activities contained in the May 2007 memorandum of understanding between the Government, UNMIS and UNDP.

50. In southern Sudan, the development of the rule of law continues to be impeded by uncertainty about "applicable law", exacerbated by delays in passing new legislation. The lack of uniformity in the application of legislation has impacted on foreign investment and economic development. Poor infrastructure, compounded by floods in many areas has inhibited the administration of, and access to, justice. The judiciary is establishing special customary Courts headed by trained judges from the Government of Southern Sudan judiciary to address the matter of the large number of persons in pre-trial detention due to tribal conflicts.

Public information

51. UNMIS radio (Miraya FM) expanded its network in southern Sudan during the reporting period. Repeater stations were set up in Torit, Yambio and Maridi in August and September. Preparations are ongoing to mount additional repeater stations in Aweil, Bentiu, Yei and Bor, and to increase the coverage area of the Malakal and Wau stations. Miraya FM is on schedule to cover all main population centres of southern Sudan by the end of 2007. Short wave services for rural areas have been contracted and testing of frequencies is ongoing.

52. Miraya FM is currently broadcasting a comprehensive series of specially produced explanatory programmes on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and is preparing a special census programme in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the southern Sudan authorities. Miraya FM also continues to support AMIS with weekly programmes and radio messages broadcasted on Darfur State radio stations.

53. During the reporting period, UNMIS delivered one-day train-the-trainer workshops on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to state officials, members of parliament, village chiefs and elders, national non-governmental organizations and students. In southern Sudan, an average of seven workshops dealing with the census, the role of UNMIS, and local reconciliation initiatives are conducted each month. In cooperation with universities in Khartoum, UNMIS has started to hold similar workshops for students in northern Sudan.

Humanitarian assistance

54. Humanitarian operations in August and September focused on providing an effective response to the serious floods that have affected an estimated 200,000 people in southern Sudan. The most critical areas are in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Northern Bahr el Ghazal States, with floods now spreading into Warrab, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes, Central, Eastern and Western Equatoria. Serious crop damage has occurred in most of the flood-affected locations and the World Food Programme continues to provide food assistance.

55. The Common Humanitarian Fund delivered $5.7 million and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund contributed $7.8 million for the flood response in advance of the 28 August "flash appeal" for $20.2 million to address outstanding needs. Despite donor requests for an appeal, no bilateral contributions have yet been received. Among the most immediate needs are support for health, food insecurity, water and sanitation activities to mitigate water and vector-borne diseases. The latter is critical since less than 40 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water or sanitation and less than a third of the population has access to adequate health services. The United Nations country team is now seeking additional support from the Common Humanitarian Fund to address the outstanding needs not met in the flash appeal.

56. Floods have significantly impeded humanitarian access, as many roads have been washed away and airstrips waterlogged. However, emergency infrastructure projects have enabled 100 per cent of food aid to be distributed by road in 2007, in comparison to 20 per cent in 2005.

Protection of civilians

57. UNMIS continued to monitor issues of civilian security in the context of tribal clashes in southern Sudan and to promote a timely response by authorities and redress for the victims. Inter-ethnic fighting continued to cause localized displacement in rural areas. The capacity of the authorities to respond to incidents has improved, particularly in securing affected areas. However, UNMIS continued to receive reports of harassment, rape and extrajudicial killings by some SPLA soldiers. The continued presence of SAF and other armed elements in the oil areas has further heightened tensions among populations, underscoring the need for a rapid deployment of joint/integrated units in this region.

Returns

58. The 2006 period for returns reached its conclusion with the arrival of torrential rains and severe flooding across much of the Nile Basin. Return operations continued for as long as possible, with movement to 9 out of 10 States in southern Sudan and two of the three transitional areas. A pilot air transport programme was

established to assist internally displaced persons travelling to more distant destinations in southern Sudan. The total number of internally displaced persons who returned home during 2007 reached 44,610, representing 70 per cent of the United Nations target for the year. Meanwhile, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted some 66,000 refugees to return home by air and road from five neighbouring countries. Further movements have been postponed until the dry season. Plans to resume return operations in the last quarter of the year remain uncertain owing to a lack of adequate funding.

Mine action

59. With the onset of the rainy season, UNMIS mine action teams focused on training, recruitment of deminers and prioritization of routes and areas to be cleared in the dry season. UNMIS and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided mine risk education to 166,992 people living in or intending to return to mine-affected areas. To date, UNMIS mine action teams have cleared 1,032 of the 2,366 at-risk areas, and opened 21,133 kilometres of roads.

60. The United Nations Mine Action Office also continued to support the development of national institutional and operational mine action capacity in the Sudan. In August, the Government approved its first national strategic framework for victim assistance, establishing guidelines for activities to support survivors of mine and explosive remnants of war and their families for the next five years. United Nations agencies helped to organize Sudan's second national victim assistance workshop, in collaboration with the National Mine Action Centre and the Southern Sudan Demining Commission. The Commission now has a functioning head office in Juba and three operational field offices in Yei, Malakal and Wau.

Economic recovery and reconstruction

61. The Government, the United Nations and the World Bank continued to prepare for the next meeting of the Sudan Consortium, which is scheduled for the first quarter of 2008. Following the recommendations from the March 2007 Sudan Consortium, the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan are reviewing the Joint Assessment Mission and evaluating external aid flows. Results of the review will be consolidated in a joint exercise and integrated into the Government of National Unity and Government of Southern Sudan strategic plan to form a shared road map for implementation of the Joint Assessment Mission for the remainder of the interim period 2008-2011. The Government of Southern Sudan continues to follow up on the proposal for the establishment of second windows to the multi-donor trust fund.

62. During the reporting period, the Government of Southern Sudan completed its rolling three-year budget sector plans. The United Nations and partners have been actively involved in the planning process and efforts are under way to ensure alignment between Government plans and the United Nations plans and programmes.

Gender

63. UNMIS technical advice to the Ministry of Justice through the Unit for Combating Violence against Women in Darfur resulted in a declaration on measures for the elimination of violence against women by the Government on 18 August

2007. In the south, UNMIS continued to build the capacity of Government counterparts on gender equality by advocating for increased participation of women in correction services and the establishment of gender and children's desks in police stations to deal with crimes against women and children. In Darfur, the gender office continued to advocate for the inclusion of women representatives in all consultative meetings.

HIV/AIDS

64. UNMIS expanded its HIV/AIDS capacity-building and sensitization campaigns, reaching a total of 2,317 peacekeepers and community members by the end of September. This included the graduation of 128 personnel from UNMIS and AMIS as peer educators and a further 256 as regional-level peer leaders. UNMIS expanded its outreach campaigns to support HIV/AIDS capacity-building in civil society and the Government of National Unity, and made plans to support the HIV/AIDS prevalence survey of the Government of National Unity.

Conduct and discipline

65. Overall, the reporting period saw a reduction in cases of misconduct within the Mission. Only 13 allegations of minor misconduct were reported and are being handled by Mission management. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported during the period. UNMIS continued to focus on the prevention of misconduct, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse, providing training on United Nations standards of conduct for 568 incoming UNMIS personnel and launching five training modules for specific target groups. The Mission's outreach programme was strengthened by the appointment by the Government of Southern Sudan of a representative to the Mission's task force on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Civilian staffing

66. There are currently 851 international civilian staff (out of a total of 1,118 posts), while the number of national civilian staff stands at 2,555 (out of a total of 3,217 posts). The Mission also employed 143 international United Nations Volunteers and 43 national United Nations Volunteers.

67. Since my previous report, I have appointed as my new Special Representative for the Sudan Ashraf Jehangir Qazi of Pakistan. Mr. Qazi, who until now served as my Special Representative for Iraq, is expected to take up his new duties in the Sudan on 24 October. Until his arrival, Taye-Brook Zerihoun will continue to serve as my Acting Special Representative. Meanwhile, Ameerah Haq of Bangladesh arrived in Khartoum on 15 September to become my Deputy Special Representative for the Sudan and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Sudan.

V. Financial aspects

68. The General Assembly, by its resolution 61/289, appropriated for the maintenance of UNMIS for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, an amount of $846.3 million, equivalent to $70.5 million per month. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNMIS beyond 31 October 2007, the cost

of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 2008 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

69. As an exceptional measure outlined in my letter dated 2 October 2007 to the President of the General Assembly (A/62/379), substantial support to AMIS under the heavy support package provisions is being financed through the temporary use of UNMIS resources pending review by the General Assembly of the proposed 2007/08 budget for UNAMID. Upon approval by the Assembly of the budget for UNAMID, expenditures incurred by UNMIS in support of AMIS will be reimbursed by UNAMID.

70. As at 31 July 2007, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNMIS amounted to $249.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,799.3 million. Reimbursement of troop-contributing Governments for troop- and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 August 2007 and 30 June 2007, respectively.

VI. Observations and recommendations

71. The events of recent months are a sobering reminder of the fragility of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation process. In the past two years, NCP and SPLM have cautiously developed political and institutional structures to take forward their complex agreement on power-sharing, wealth-sharing and mutual security, and self-determination. However, their partnership has been weakened by mutual mistrust, differing interpretations of the Agreement, and the slow progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Strengthening the NCP-SPLM partnership is crucial for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which remains central to peace and stability in the Sudan. I commend the parties for their continued efforts to overcome their differences and defuse potential crises through dialogue, including the prompt action taken by the Ceasefire Political Commission to address the situation in Muglad in September and the high-level political discussions to address the crisis in the Government of National Unity in October.

72. Nevertheless, these remain difficult times for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Failure by the parties to provide the political will necessary to resolve their differences and make concrete progress on the outstanding issues without further delay could undermine the integrity of this crucial, hard-won agreement. The unresolved status of Abyei, the lack of demarcation of the 1956 border, and the incomplete redeployment of SAF and SPLA forces form a dangerous constellation of deadlocked issues which is likely to further test the resilience of the NCP-SPLM partnership. Both parties have understandable concerns and interests, closely linked to the cultural and political demands of communities as well as to the strategic value of oilfields concentrated in the 1956 border area. I urge both parties to intensify their efforts to tackle these issues peacefully and expeditiously.

73. In particular, I call upon the parties to resolve the boundary and Abyei issues promptly and within the framework of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. SAF and SPLA should complete their respective redeployments with full transparency and on the basis of a mutually agreed arrangement for maintaining security of the oilfields. I call upon both sides to set and adhere to realistic timelines for the final

demarcation of all relevant boundaries, and in the meantime to refrain from unilateral actions which may escalate tensions in the boundary area. I remind the parties that the United Nations stands ready to offer technical, monitoring or other support as they may require and request.

74. In the past six months, UNMIS has carried out a comprehensive strategic assessment and structural review, and has initiated with the parties a high-level consultation mechanism through which to discuss strategic priorities. Both these initiatives reinforce the view that the needs of the next 18 months to 2 years will differ from those of 2005, and that the Mission must adapt accordingly. I will report on progress and findings in this regard in my next report to the Security Council.

75. The six-year interim period has now entered its second phase, during which the focus of the peace process will become increasingly political, while the security environment may be increasingly tenuous. Moreover, should the parties make progress on key issues of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the next few months, as they have pledged to do, they may wish to call upon UNMIS for additional or more focused monitoring and support. I therefore recommend that the Security Council consider extending the mandate of UNMIS for a further period of 12 months, until 31 October 2008, and that in advance of that date the Council consider a more general review of the mandate of the Mission.

76. As the process of redeployment is completed, the military focus will shift to those areas where both parties' armed forces continue to have a presence; primarily the area around the 1956 boundary. The two parties have an interest in ensuring transparent monitoring of this area and in making use of the ceasefire joint monitoring mechanisms, which have proved effective in maintaining stability and building confidence. I encourage both parties to make full use of the United Nations military observers and the Joint Military Teams, and to guarantee their full freedom of movement.

77. In line with the schedule on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the parties, with United Nations support, should increase their efforts to prepare for the census and elections. At the same time, as the Government of Southern Sudan consolidates itself, UNMIS and relevant United Nations agencies will provide support to the fledgling civilian administration. Development and reconstruction in southern Sudan and the transitional areas, particularly the delivery of basic services, are of critical importance in creating visible peace dividends for the war-affected population. I hope that the opening of the second window of the multi-donor trust fund and the support of donors will assist in this process through the prioritization of social service deliveries and early recovery activities.

78. I commend the progress made by the Government of Southern Sudan in the establishment of institutions, particularly at the central, state and county levels, and their increasing focus on decentralization. UNMIS will continue to work closely with the Government in the strengthening of commissions and institutions to ensure that the Government of Southern Sudan is able to take the lead in the recovery and development process.

79. Continued delays in the nationally led disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process are a cause for concern. The national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration institutions, cooperating with international partners, have made considerable efforts to develop a joint strategy and operational

planning. However, both parties remain fundamentally reluctant to reduce active forces during the interim period, as was envisaged in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. International stakeholders, including the United Nations, should make a realistic assessment of the prospects for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the medium term and focus their resources accordingly, in consultation with the parties themselves.

80. The security situation is likely to remain volatile in the coming months. In addition to the challenges of the security arrangements for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, inter-communal tensions in southern Sudan and the transitional areas continue to pose localized threats, and may even increase in the run-up to 2009 elections. More seriously, the UNMIS area of operations is vulnerable to possible spillover of the conflict in Darfur. The September attacks on Wad Banda in Northern Kordofan and the presence of SPLA-aligned forces at Abu Matarig in Southern Darfur are a reminder that the peace process in Darfur is also critical to the stability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. As UNAMID deploys, the two operations will cooperate closely. Every effort must be made to ensure that the Missions are adequately resourced to face common challenges.

81. The implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in full and without delay, is central to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sudan. While the conflict in Darfur has undoubtedly had consequences for the rest of the country, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains critical to long-lasting peace throughout the Sudan. I urge the parties to implement all provisions of the Agreement in the same spirit as it was negotiated. Some key issues of the Agreement will clearly require political courage and leadership on both sides. Postponing and delaying implementation will only serve to undermine the very purpose of the Agreement, the creation of a peaceful and united Sudan.

82. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to all United Nations personnel working in the Sudan, as well as the efforts of the African Union and the support provided by Member States, including donors and troop-contributing countries, for their determined efforts to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and to end the conflict in Darfur.

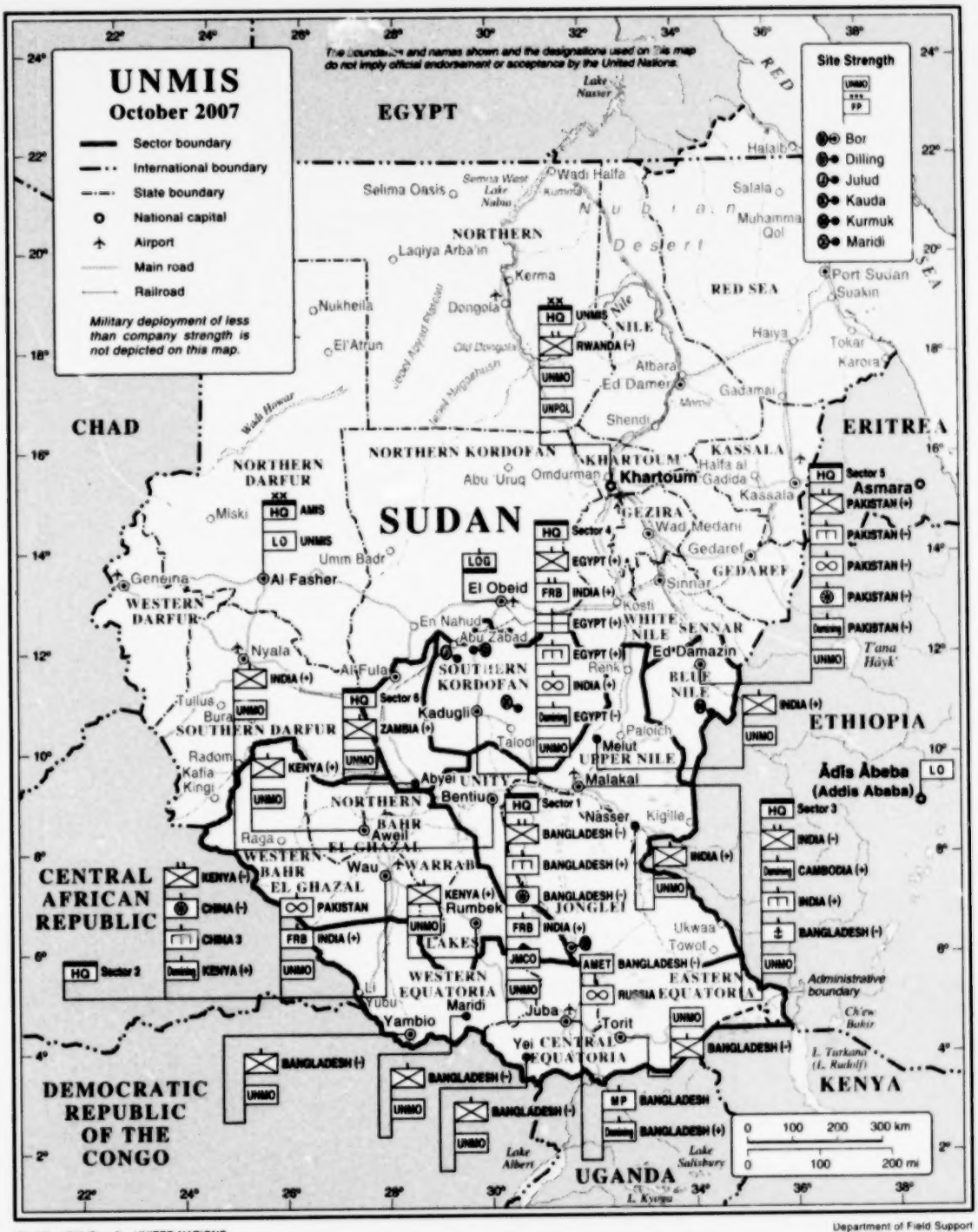
Annex

Military and police component as at 20 October 2007

	Military component								*Civilian police*	
	Observers		*Staff officers*		*Troops*		*Military subtotal*			
Country	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Argentina	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	—
Australia	6	—	7	2	—	—	13	2	8	2
Bangladesh	20	—	32	—	1 512	4	1 564	4	32	—
Belgium	5	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	—
Benin	7	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	—
Bolivia	16	—	1	—	—	—	17	—	—	—
Bosnia and Herzegovina	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Botswana	5	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	—
Brazil	24	—	—	—	—	—	24	—	2	—
Burkina Faso	6	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	—
Cambodia	10	—	1	—	135	—	146	—	—	—
Canada	21	2	6	2	—	—	27	4	2	—
China	14	—	11	—	425	10	450	10	8	—
Croatia	—	—	7	—	—	—	7	—	—	—
Denmark	10	—	5	—	—	—	15	—	1	—
Ecuador	15	—	—	—	—	—	15	—	—	—
Egypt	18	—	20	—	781	15	819	15	7	—
El Salvador	5	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	3	2
Fiji	7	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	1	—
Finland	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
France	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Gabon	8	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	—	—
Gambia	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	18	1
Germany	31	—	5	—	—	—	36	—	5	—
Ghana	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	—	38	2
Greece	2	—	2	—	—	—	4	—	—	—
Guatemala	8	—	1	—	—	—	9	—	—	—
Guinea	4	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—
India	20	—	28	—	2 574	5	2 622	5	13	2
Indonesia	10	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	6	—
Italy	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

	Military component								Civilian police	
	Observers		Staff officers		Troops		Military subtotal			
Country	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Jamaica	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
Jordan	7	—	10	—	—	—	17	—	12	2
Kyrgyzstan	8	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	2	—
Malawi	6	—	2	—	—	—	8	—	—	—
Malaysia	8	—	4	—	—	—	12	—	11	—
Mali	10	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	—
Moldova	2	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Mongolia	2	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Mozambique	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Namibia	7	2	—	—	—	—	7	2	1	—
Nepal	8	—	8	—	—	—	16	—	56	1
Netherlands	7	—	5	—	—	—	12	—	15	1
New Zealand	2	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Niger	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Nigeria	11	1	9	1	—	—	20	2	48	3
Norway	13	2	6	2	—	—	19	4	6	—
Pakistan	20	—	28	—	1 532	7	1 580	7	37	2
Paraguay	10	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	—
Peru	17	—	—	—	—	—	17	—	—	—
Philippines	13	—	—	—	—	—	13	—	52	2
Poland	2	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Republic of Kenya	7	—	11	—	775	45	793	45	18	2
Republic of Korea	7	—	1	—	—	—	8	—	—	—
Romania	12	—	—	—	—	—	12	—	—	—
Russian Federation	14	—	2	—	120	—	136	—	10	—
Rwanda	15	—	9	—	253	—	277	—	25	—
Samoa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	—
Senegal	—	—	5	—	—	—	5	—	—	—
South Africa	—	—	3	1	—	—	3	1	—	—
Sri Lanka	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	24	—
Sweden	3	—	3	—	—	—	6	—	10	1
Thailand	12	—	2	—	—	—	14	—	—	—
Turkey	—	—	4	—	—	—	4	—	17	—

	Military component								Civilian police	
	Observers		Staff officers		Troops		Military subtotal			
Country	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Uganda	9	2	—	—	—	—	9	2	9	3
Ukraine	6	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	16	—
United Kingdom	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	—	1	—
United Republic of Tanzania	15	—	6	—	—	—	21	—	—	—
United States of America	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	1
Uruguay	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Yemen	16	—	4	—	—	—	20	—	3	—
Zambia	12	2	11	—	326	17	349	19	15	3
Zimbabwe	12	2	3	—	—	—	15	2	23	9
Total per gender	**571**	**13**	**274**	**8**	**8 434**	**103**	**9 278**	**124**	**600**	**41**
Total	**584**		**282**		**8 536**		**9 402**		**641**	



Map No. 4249 Rev. 9 UNITED NATIONS
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General Assembly
Security Council

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General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Agenda item 22
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 19 October 2007, addressed to you by Kemal Gökeri, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Baki **İlkin**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

07-55926 (E) 251007

Annex to the letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the Turkish Cypriot revised package of proposals on confidence-building measures, which was submitted to you on 16 October 2007, at your meeting with Mehmet Ali Talat, President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

I would be grateful if the text on the confidence-building measures could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) M. Kemal **Gökeri**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Enclosure

Turkish Cypriot revised package of proposals on confidence-building measures

16 October 2007

The Turkish Cypriot side remains committed to the efforts to seek a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the good offices mission of the United Nations Secretary-General. To this end, we believe that the initiation of certain confidence-building measures will be conducive to preparing the ground for the start of full-fledged negotiations aimed at a comprehensive settlement.

In our letter dated 6 July 2006, we proposed the following confidence-building measures:

1. **Deconfrontation**: to enter into intensive discussions with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) with a view to extending the 1989 Unmanning Agreement to cover those areas of the buffer zone where the two sides are in close proximity to each other, on the basis of the updated proposals submitted by UNFICYP in June 1996.

2. **Military exercises**: the military authorities on both sides to refrain from conducting any military exercise involving mechanized and battle tank companies along and within sight or hearing range of the buffer zone. We propose that this zone extend 1.5 kilometres to the north and to the south of the buffer zone.

3. **Lokmacı (Ledra Street) crossing point**: cooperation with UNFICYP, with a view to completing the opening of the crossing point at Lokmacı. The Turkish Cypriot side is prepared for, and has indeed proposed, the opening of the crossing point by following the same procedures as in the other crossing points opened to date. There should be no preconditions for the opening of the crossing point.

4. **Reconciliation Commission**: with a forward-looking and future-oriented mandate, the establishment of a Reconciliation Commission to promote understating, tolerance and mutual respect between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. The Reconciliation Commission shall be composed of an equal number of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.

Further to these measures, we propose the following additional confidence-building measures:

5. **New crossing points and passages**:

   After the opening of the Lokmaci crossing point:

   (a) opening of the Yeşilırmak (Limnitis) crossing point;

   (b) ensuring free passage to and from Erenköy (Kokkina).

   This confidence-building item presumes that the long-pending issue of the Yiğitler (Arsos)-Pile (Pyla) road will be concluded without further delay. The Turkish Cypriot side is of the view that in this particular issue there has been a long-standing injustice in the treatment of the two sides

by the United Nations. As is known, UNFICYP has given its permission for the completion of the Voroklini (Voraglini)-Pile (Pyla) road, providing an important facility to the Greek Cypriots of Pile. Objection to a similar facility to the Turkish Cypriot inhabitants of the village continues to put them in a disadvantaged situation, compared to the Greek Cypriots of Pile.

6. **Cooperation through UNFICYP**: taking into consideration the reluctance of the Greek Cypriot side to cooperate with the Turkish Cypriot side on issues of mutual concern, UNFICYP would serve as a facilitator on areas that require cooperation between the two sides on equal footing, including transboundary issues such as human trafficking and human smuggling, narcotics and crime.

United Nations A/62/500–S/2007/626

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General Assembly
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Agenda item 22
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 19 October 2007, addressed to you by Kemal Gökeri, representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Baki **İlkin**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

07-55917 (E) 251007

Annex to the letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 5 October 2007, addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (A/62/472-S/2007/595), which yet again contains well-known allegations of violations of "international air traffic regulations and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus", and to bring to your kind attention the following.

As stated in our previous communications addressed to you, repeated allegations by the Greek Cypriot side of so-called "airspace violations" are totally unfounded and are rejected in toto by our authorities. The present allegations do not merit a detailed reply as they are of a similar nature. However, I wish to emphasize, once again, that flights within the sovereign airspace and flight information region of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus take place with the full knowledge and consent of the appropriate authorities of the State. The Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or right of say over flights within the national airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that allegations of so-called violations of air traffic regulations are invalid, as the civil aviation authority of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the only competent authority to provide air traffic and aeronautical information services.

The Greek Cypriot Administration should be reminded, once again, that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Turkey. I also deem it imperative to point out, once again, that the attitude demonstrated by the Greek Cypriot representatives in their constant repetition of false claims is nothing more than rhetoric, which unfortunately wastes the precious time and energy of the international community. They would do better to concentrate on taking concrete steps towards the achievement of a fair and just settlement in Cyprus within the context of your mission of good offices and on the basis of the established United Nations parameters and body of work.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) M. Kemal **Gökeri**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

United Nations S/2007/627

Security Council

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25 October 2007

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Note by the President of the Security Council

At its 5769th meeting, on 25 October 2007, the Security Council considered its draft report to the General Assembly covering the period from 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007. The Security Council adopted the draft report without a vote.

07-56612 (E) 261007

United Nations A/ES-10/403–S/2007/628

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Identical letters dated 23 October 2007 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

More than 11,000 Palestinian civilians, including more than 400 children and more than 100 women, are being held in the prisons and detention centres of Israel, the occupying Power. The majority of Palestinians being illegally imprisoned or arbitrarily detained by Israel are subject to extremely harsh living conditions and constant physical and mental ill-treatment, including coercive interrogations and humiliation, and many of them are subject to torture. The inhumane treatment of Palestinian prisoners at the hands of the occupying Power has been the cause of widespread suffering and trauma among the prisoners and has led to the death of at least 190 Palestinian prisoners over the many years of this prolonged and bitter foreign occupation of the Palestinian land and people.

In this regard, I regret to inform you of the death today of a Palestinian prisoner, Mohammed Al-Ashqar, 33 years of age, who died as a result of the critical wounds he sustained yesterday, 22 October, at the southern Israeli detention camp of Al-Naqab (Ketziot) in the Negev, when Israeli guards fired upon prisoners with live ammunition and tear gas, injuring at least 250 other prisoners. Clashes had broken out at the detention camp, where more than 2,300 people are being imprisoned in tents, after Israeli guards began conducting provocative cell searches in the night, causing an escalation of tensions. Mr. Al-Ashqar, who was hit with several bullets, had been sentenced to about three years and had only three months remaining in his sentence. He was the father of one child. Palestinian prisoners are waging a hunger strike today in protest of the killing and Israel's harsh treatment of prisoners. Moreover, following the death of Mr. Al-Ashqar, the Palestinian Council of Ministers decided today to request the appropriate United Nations body to conduct an investigation into this serious matter.

It is imperative to stress that, as the occupying Power, Israel remains bound by numerous obligations under international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, with regard to all of its actions in the Occupied Palestinian

07-56016 (E) 241007

Territory, including East Jerusalem, including vis-à-vis the civilians it imprisons or detains. Article 76 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War clearly defines the rights of protected persons faced with detention by an occupying Power. Among these rights is the right to remain in the occupied territory during all stages of the detention, including during the serving of prison sentences if convicted, which is clearly being violated by the occupying Power as a result of its transfer of prisoners and detainees to areas inside Israel. Israel is also committing numerous other violations and grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant provisions of international law with its unjust imprisonment and brutal treatment of the thousands of Palestinian civilians in its jails and detention centres, including as a result of the denial of family visits, the denial of adequate medical care, the denial of special protection for women and children detainees and the denial of due process and fair trials.

The international community should act to urgently address this very serious issue and to uphold international law in this regard. In addition, it must be reiterated that the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have an obligation under article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions to respect and ensure respect of the Convention in all circumstances, and this includes the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to which the Fourth Geneva Convention is applicable, and which Israel, the occupying Power, must abide by.

Palestine calls for the immediate release of all Palestinian civilians being unlawfully imprisoned or detained by Israel, the occupying Power, including the children, women and more than 40 Palestinian officials being unjustly held. The international community should compel Israel to release the thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees it is holding and, until they are released, the international community should demand that the occupying Power respect its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, vis-à-vis its treatment of these protected persons.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 298 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 October 2007 (A/ES-10/402-S/2007/599), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer

United Nations S/2007/629

Security Council

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24 October 2007

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Sixth semi-annual Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. In the past six months, Lebanon has continued to experience political crisis and instability, which have constituted significant obstacles to the further implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). Political tension focused primarily on the demand of the opposition, consisting of Amal, Hizbullah, and the Free Patriotic Movement, to establish a national unity government, and on the succession to President Lahoud, whose extended term in office ends in November 2007. The protests in front of the Prime Minister's office, which have paralysed regular political life in Lebanon since December 2006, have continued.

2. A significant number of bomb attacks and assassinations have taken place during the reporting period. On 20 May, the day on which prolonged fighting began between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the militant Islamist group Fatah al-Islam, an explosion in the Beirut neighbourhood of Ashrafiyeh killed one person and wounded 12 others. On 24 May, an explosion in Alley wounded 16 people. On 5 June, an explosion in Beirut left 10 people injured. Two days later, a bomb went off near a town north of Beirut; one person was killed and three others were wounded.

3. On 13 June, a car bomb killed a former judge, Member of Parliament Walid Eido, from the Future Movement, as well as his son and eight others. By-elections to replace the assassinated Members of Parliament Walid Eido (Beirut/Future Movement) and Pierre Gemayel (Metn/Phalange Party) were held on 5 August in a tense climate and despite President Lahoud's refusal to sanction the vote. In Beirut, Muhammad al-Amin Itani from the Future Movement won; in the Metn, Camille Khoury from the Free Patriotic Movement won the seat previously held by the Phalange Party in a tightly contested race against the leader of the Phalange Party, Amin Gemayel, the former President and father of the assassinated Pierre Gemayel.

4. On 19 September, a car bomb killed Antoine Ghanem, Member of Parliament from the Phalange Party, and seven others. The assassination of Mr. Ghanem came two days after he returned from the United Arab Emirates, where he had taken refuge for several weeks. His assassination, in combination with previous assassinations of members of the ruling coalition, reduced the governing coalition's majority to 68 out of 128 Members of Parliament and not only raised the spectre of further deterioration of the situation in the country, but also appeared to be

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indicative of a systematic attempt to upset the political balance that has existed since the parliamentary elections of May/June 2005.

5. In addition to these attacks against politicians and civilians, there were also two attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — one on 24 June, which killed six peacekeepers, the other on 16 July, which damaged a United Nations vehicle — as well as the rocket attack on 17 June from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. The Council has already been briefed on these incidents.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

6. Despite the general conditions of political crisis and instability, the Government of Lebanon has continued to make progress towards extending its authority over all of the Lebanese territory, disarming and disbanding militias, and asserting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, most notably with the successful battle against and containment of Fatah al-Islam in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.

7. However, the emergence of Fatah al-Islam, the precarious security situation and the enduring political stalemate underline the undiminished challenges to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon. Resolution 1559 (2004) thus remains to be implemented in full.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

8. In earlier reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), I outlined that the resolution places central emphasis on the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon, and that I assigned this matter the highest priority in my efforts to assist with the implementation of the resolution.

9. In the second semi-annual report (S/2005/673 of 26 October 2005), the Secretary-General was able to certify that despite ongoing and necessary work to ensure the broad freeness and credibility of electoral processes in Lebanon, the operational requirement of free and credible parliamentary elections derived from resolution 1559 (2004) had been met. The same conclusion applied to the withdrawal of the Syrian troops, military assets and military intelligence apparatus from Lebanon.

10. I have since continued my efforts to encourage the early initiation of a process between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, based on an agreed action agenda, which will eventually lead to the establishment of full diplomatic relations, in fulfilment of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1680 (2006). There has been no progress towards this goal. I have also continued my work towards the achievement of the full delineation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, and in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. So far, there has been no agreement on these issues between the parties. I urge them to address these matters and will report on them, as well as on the continued frequent

Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty, in detail in my forthcoming report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

11. Preventing breaches of the arms embargo imposed is a critical element for the achievement of full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, as called for in resolution 1559 (2004). I have again received information from Member States in the region that appears to corroborate the allegation that the Syrian Arab Republic facilitates the flow of weapons and fighters across the Syrian-Lebanese border.

12. The Syrian Arab Republic has continued to deny any involvement in effecting breaches of the arms embargo. In identical letters dated 16 July 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the President of the Security Council and myself, the Syrian Arab Republic "reaffirmed the invalidity of the claims and allegations" made in my previous report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) and in my Special Envoy's briefing to the Security Council.

13. There are indications that Lebanese sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence continue to suffer further infringements. In a letter addressed to me on 8 October 2007, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Fouad Siniora, made available to me information obtained by the Lebanese authorities from the interrogation of detained Fatah al-Islam members and from captured software data. This information, the Prime Minister wrote, "clearly points to a carefully drawn plot, of very serious and dangerous proportions, to seize control of a good part of northern Lebanon, destabilize the whole country by bombing Government and business institutions, mount attacks against UNIFIL in order to threaten participating countries and jeopardize the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, particularly 1701 (2006)". The Prime Minister further wrote that the information "clearly supports the strong suspicion that the Fatah al-Islam plans were also linked to the ongoing attempts to topple the democratically chosen Government, jeopardize a democratic election of a new president, and create conditions that would impede progress in the setting up of the special tribunal [to investigate] ... the assassination of the late Prime Minister Hariri and others that followed". The United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the information contained in the Prime Minister's letter.

14. According to the Prime Minister of Lebanon, the information obtained by the Lebanese authorities from the interrogation of detained Fatah al-Islam members and from captured software data suggests those members of Fatah al-Islam "who came from Syria illegally, including its leadership, did so through the stretch of Lebanese-Syrian border controlled by" the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), which is headquartered in Damascus. As the Prime Minister further wrote, "it is common knowledge that PFLP-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada (which controls another stretch of the Lebanese-Syrian border) have both set up military bases on the Lebanese side of the border and are closely associated with, and are supported and supplied with weapons, ammunitions and provisions regularly from, Syria".

15. Through the Prime Minister's letter and on the basis of the information obtained by the Lebanese authorities from the interrogation of detained Fatah al-Islam members and from captured software data, the Government of Lebanon has

further asserted that the circumstances of Fatah al-Islam leader Shaker Yousef al-Abssi's release from prison in the Syrian Arab Republic, "and the way that his movements and those of Fatah al-Islam recruits into Lebanon were facilitated by Fatah al-Intifada within Syria, from Syria into Lebanon, and within Lebanon, as well as the 'peaceful' manner in which Fatah al-Intifada recast itself, turned over its facilities and resources and mutated into Fatah al-Islam, clearly point to a deliberate and carefully designed plan, which could not have been without the knowledge and blessing of Fatah al-Intifada's sponsors, namely Syrian intelligence". In his letter, the Prime Minister further states that "the direct contact between some of Fatah al-Islam's leaders and some senior Syrian intelligence officers, which were revealed in the interrogations, are consistent with the suspicion that Syrian intelligence has used Fatah al-Islam to serve its political and security objectives in Lebanon".

16. The Prime Minister also stated in his letter that "reportedly, significant amounts of weapons transferred from Syria during the July 2006 war, and probably in the period since then, have been made available to some parties with very close ties to Syria" within Lebanon, in the context of widespread allegations that Lebanese parties and militias are rearming.

17. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in a letter addressed to me by its Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs on 19 October 2007, strongly rejected the assertions made by the Prime Minister of Lebanon in his letter to me and called them "disinformation". In the letter, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic affirmed its full respect for the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon and the necessity of non-intervention in its internal affairs. It further affirmed that "it is prepared to help its Lebanese brothers to bridge the gap between their different positions" and that "it desires to establish better relations between the two countries at various levels".

18. In its letter, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also affirmed that, as a neighbour of Lebanon, "the Syrian Arab Republic is most concerned by the unacceptable levels of tension in that country, which pose a threat to its present and future". The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic further stated:

> "in this regard, it points to the fact that the flagrant foreign intervention by a major international power, which to date has served to deepen the differences between the Lebanese and prevented them from reaching a solution to the problems facing their country, constitutes a direct threat to the security and stability of Lebanon, since it is clearly and openly aligned with one Lebanese side against another and is accompanied by a misleading media campaign that blames other Lebanese sides and the Syrian Arab Republic when Lebanon does not take the desired direction".

19. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic further stated that it had "observed with great regret that some Lebanese, with widely-recognized foreign support, have adopted extreme positions that do not serve that purpose", and that "some officials have recently gone so far as to exploit their visits to the United Nations with the singular aim of distorting the image of the Syrian Arab Republic, inciting the Security Council against it and sending letters to the United Nations and other international organizations, showing no evidence of the least desire to establish normal relations between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon". The Syrian letter continued with the assertion that these officials

> "also launched misleading media campaign which have distorted the facts and harmed the spirit of the historic fraternal relations between the peoples of the two countries. This behaviour, which lacks the minimum of political and moral decorum, left no opportunity for serious dialogue between the two countries. Lebanese Government officials at the highest levels and the leaders of some of the militias which shed Lebanese blood during the civil war and are representatives in the present Government took part in this campaign. It was in this context that the letter dated 8 October 2007 from the Prime Minister of Lebanon addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations was sent, containing various forms of disinformation and turning the facts upside down, with the objective of concealing the failure of the Government, its officials and those standing behind them to assume their responsibilities to the various sectors of Lebanese society. The Syrian Arab Republic has taken the high ground by not responding to those fabrications and the inflammatory propaganda directed against it, and continues to stand by Lebanon — all of Lebanon — in order to respond to the great challenges facing both Lebanon and the region".

20. The letter from the Syrian Arab Republic also conveyed the position of the Syrian Arab Republic that "it has implemented all the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) that apply to it by withdrawing its military forces and related security apparatus from Lebanon". It further stated that

> "the issues of diplomatic relations and border demarcation between Syria and Lebanon are questions of national sovereignty that will be settled by agreement between the Syrian Government and a Lebanese Government that does not set itself up as an enemy of Syria. It is well known to all who take an interest in the matter both inside and outside Lebanon, as well as to all the States Members of the United Nations, that Syria stands ready to establish full diplomatic relations with a Lebanese Government that guarantees friendly relations with Syria, rather than hostile relations as is now the case with the Siniora Government".

21. The letter continued with the assertion that the Syrian Arab Republic had "taken every measure to prevent smuggling across its borders with Lebanon, having doubled the number of border guards on the Syrian side. In addition, contacts between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon regarding control of their common borders have not ceased. We have provided the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council with a detailed listing of their meetings".

22. I note that the United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the information contained in the letter from the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. The United Nations is also not in a position to corroborate the charges made by the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, in his speech on Al-Quds Day, according to which Israel is behind the string of assassinations in Lebanon.[1]

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[1] In his speech on the occasion of Al-Quds Day, on 5 October, Hassan Nasrallah stated: "In Lebanon, we recently witnessed a string of assassination operations, the most recent of which was the assassination of MP Antoine Ghanem. When an assassination of this kind is committed against a March 14 figure, it has become a tradition for that group to instantly accuse Syria from the first few minutes. Some even go as far as accusing or blaming Syria's allies for these assassinations [...] I am not saying that March 14 forces kill their own leaders and figures, but I say that the 'Israelis' are the ones who kill March 14 personalities and leaders."

B. Extension of Government of Lebanon control over all Lebanese territory

24. The Security Council, in its presidential statements of 11 June 2007 (S/PRST/2007/17) and 3 August 2007 (S/PRST/2007/29), reiterated its full support for the legitimate and democratically elected Government of Lebanon, called for full respect for the democratic institutions of the country, in conformity with its Constitution, and condemned any effort to destabilize Lebanon.

25. Over the past six months, in the context of the ongoing political crisis in Lebanon, the Government has remained restricted in its ability to extend its authority over the whole Lebanese territory. The Government's constitutional legitimacy has remained contested by the opposition and by President Lahoud. The precarious security conditions over the past six months have also forced many Members of Parliament to reside abroad permanently or to seclude themselves from their own constituents, thus undermining the democratic institutions of Lebanon and the continued exercise of the political functions of the democratically elected representatives of the people of Lebanon. The series of political assassinations has hampered the effective regular functioning of all State institutions.

26. As I wrote in my previous report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), a resolution of the crisis, through national reconciliation and dialogue, now most notably on the issue of the presidency, is a necessary precondition for the extension of Government of Lebanon control over all Lebanese territory and the exertion of the Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

27. Despite these limitations, the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces made significant progress towards extending the Government's authority over all Lebanese territory and towards disarming and disbanding all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias with their successful fight against Fatah al-Islam. On 20 May, fighting erupted between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces in and around the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon. Fatah al-Islam posed the most significant challenge to the further extension of Government of Lebanon control over all Lebanese territory during the reporting period; the fighting signified the most severe violence in Lebanon since the end of the civil war.

28. After 15 weeks — 105 days — the fighting ended on 2 September, when the Lebanese Armed Forces declared victory over the militant Islamist group. It left 168 Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers and approximately 222 militants dead, and hundreds of soldiers, militants and civilians injured; 202 militants were arrested; an additional number have been detained since the fighting ended formally. However, the leader of the group, Shaker Yousef al-Abssi, and a number of other militants escaped. The Lebanese authorities have issued arrest warrants for them.

29. In the letter Prime Minister Siniora addressed to me on 8 October, the Government of Lebanon provided further details on Fatah al-Islam and affirmed that the Government maintained extreme vigilance in pursuing members of Fatah al-Islam who might still be at large, as well as other associates of Fatah al-Islam. However, as the Prime Minister also wrote in his letter, "the fact that Government security authority does not yet extend to all of Lebanon's territory, including Palestinian refugee camps which have been outside Government control since 1969, is undoubtedly a complicating factor".

30. The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly affirmed to me that it has a vital interest in controlling its borders to prevent the smuggling of arms, munitions and personnel into its territory. However, the Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces have also remained constrained in their ability to effectively extend governmental control over all Lebanese territory owing to the various security crises in the country that have placed a huge strain on the Lebanese Armed Forces, which over the past six months had to fight militants in Nahr al-Bared; maintain its large deployment in South Lebanon; provide internal security, in particular in the light of the continued blockade of the capital's city centre, where regular economic life has been disrupted substantially; prepare for traditional territorial defence; and engage in anti-smuggling activities.

31. In this context, I renew my call on donor countries to come forward and help the Lebanese Armed Forces meet its obligations concerning the extension of the Government of Lebanon's control over all of the territory of Lebanon and the establishment of the democratically elected Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout Lebanon, in fulfilment of the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). The urgency of my call is underpinned by the prolonged battle at Nahr al-Bared, which has highlighted and exacerbated the substantial needs of the Lebanese Armed Forces in training, weapons and ammunition.

32. The assertions made by the Government of Lebanon to the effect that arms, munitions, and personnel reach militia from the Syrian Arab Republic, once again underscores the importance of the full delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border. I have also taken note, however, of the position conveyed to me by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in its letter to me of 19 October 2007.

33. In the context of prolonged political crisis, the challenge from militias and allegations of widespread rearming and paramilitary training, the Government of Lebanon's authority throughout its territory remains constrained and contested, as does the Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

34. While the Government of Lebanon has made significant progress in disbanding and disarming Fatah al-Islam in a determined struggle, it faces undiminished challenges regarding the continued existence and strength of other Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

Fatah al-Islam

35. During the standoff between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam, Lebanon paid a heavy price for the reassertion of governmental control and the successful effort to contain and eradicate a hostile militia that had engaged in terrorist acts in the country.

36. In his letter of 8 October 2007, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, on the basis of the information obtained by the Lebanese authorities from the interrogation of detained Fatah al-Islam members and from captured software data, indicated that many Fatah al-Islam members were "genuine" jihadists who thought they were being trained to fight in Iraq. According to the Prime Minister's letter, most

non-Lebanese members of Fatah al-Islam entered Lebanon illegally by land from the Syrian Arab Republic, although a few individuals with no previous record arrived through Beirut airport. The arrival of Fatah al-Islam militants in Lebanon is believed to be the consequence of efforts to circumscribe the infiltration of such fighters into Iraq. According to the Government of Lebanon, many Fatah al-Islam members not only passed through Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada bases on Lebanese soil but also underwent military training there. According to the Lebanese authorities and other Member States in the region, there are ties between Fatah al-Islam, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and Fatah al-Intifada; the latter, in particular, acted as a facilitator for Fatah al-Islam in Syria and Lebanon.

37. The United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the information contained in the Prime Minister's letter or information received from Member States in the region. In its response to the specific issues raised by the Prime Minister of Lebanon in his letter to me of 8 October, the Syrian Arab Republic asserted that

> "the Prime Minister of Lebanon knows better than anyone that it was the Syrian Arab Republic that provided generous support to the Lebanese Army in its confrontation with the terrorists at Nahr al-Bared. It also had closed its borders in order to support the operations of the Lebanese Army. Contrary to the lies contained in that letter, the Syrian Arab Republic has stressed that Fatah al-Islam was as much an enemy to Syria as it was to Lebanon. In that regard, we should like to refer the Prime Minister of Lebanon to statements made by senior Lebanese Army commanders in which they confirmed that Fatah al-Islam was a branch of Al-Qaeda and had no link to Syrian intelligence."

In the letter from the Syrian Arab Republic, it is further stated that "it is well known that Syrian security forces have had numerous confrontations with Fatah al-Islam in which they succeeded in killing a number of its members, among them its vice-president, Muhammad Twayrah, who was killed near the Syrian-Iraqi border at the time the Nahr al-Bared battles were commencing".

38. The Lebanese authorities have charged more than 330 militants in connection with the fighting in and around the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.

39. According to the Government of Lebanon, Fatah al-Islam militants also confessed to the bombing of two commuter buses in the village of Ain Alaq, north-east of Beirut, on 13 February 2007. In June, the Lebanese State prosecution filed charges against 16 Fatah al-Islam suspects in relation to the bombing; nine of the defendants were in custody. The group reportedly comprised 10 Syrian nationals, two Lebanese, three Palestinians and one Saudi. In its letter to me of 19 October 2007, the Syrian Arab Republic asserted that "it should be noted that while the Lebanese Prime Minister identified the nationalities of some of the terrorists, he dared not identify those of the rest, who constituted the majority, for reasons that are known to all". I reiterate that the United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the information received from either the Lebanese authorities or from Syria, or from other Member States in the region.

40. The involvement of Fatah al-Islam in the bombing demonstrated, according to the Prime Minister of Lebanon's letter to me of 8 October 2007, the "non-jihadist"

nature of many of Fatah al-Islam's activities and objectives. The Prime Minister further wrote:

> "The slaughter of off-duty soldiers and innocent civilians as well as theft and bank robberies were clearly at odds with the declared jihadist agenda of the organization. These activities have led the vast majority of Palestinians to distance themselves from Fatah al-Islam. It is also quite telling that even Al-Qaida did not want to associate itself with the organization or its actions. The insistence, which came out in the interrogation that the Ain Alaq bombing should take place on the eve of a planned rally on the anniversary of [former Prime Minister Rafiq] Hariri's assassination on February 14, confirms that there were distinctly political and non-ideological motives behind some of Fatah al-Islam's actions."

41. The Government of Lebanon has further informed me that, while Fatah al-Islam has been uprooted from Nahr al-Bared, there are documented links between it and other extremist groups in other parts of Lebanon. Reports in October this year indicated that the Lebanese authorities had arrested some 30 Islamist militants who were allegedly plotting to bomb the main police headquarters in Beirut and attack Arab and European diplomats in Lebanon. The militants were arrested in and around Sidon in August. Some of them belonged to Fatah al-Islam; others were members of another Al-Qaida-inspired group. There have been allegations that some of the militants were connected with the 16 July attack on UNIFIL.

42. Information that has been shared with me by other regional Member States indicates that the threat from Al-Qaida-inspired militias in Palestinian refugee camps remains undiminished. While Fatah al-Islam has been curbed, other such groups remain active and may indeed be drawing lessons from the mistakes and failures of Fatah al-Islam.

Situation in Palestinian refugee camps

43. Palestinian refugee camps continue to pose a major challenge to stability and security in Lebanon. Tension has increased between Palestinian refugees and some parts of the Lebanese population. In addition, a variety of Al-Qaida-affiliated or inspired groups appear to have established themselves in the camps. Besides Fatah al-Islam, groups such as Jund al-Sham and 'Usbat al-Ansar with military experience and ties to Al-Qaida are active in the camps. According to information provided to me by regional Member States, these groups draw on fighters recruited to join the insurgency in Iraq. By and large, however, the Palestine Liberation Organization and Fatah retain control of most of the refugee camps and curb the influence and activities of such groups.

44. On 4 June, violence erupted in the 'Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp. The extremist militant group Jund al-Sham, which is known to espouse an Al-Qaida-oriented ideology and to also operate in Syria, was apparently involved in the incident. Despite fears that the incident might signal a spreading of the violence from Nahr al-Bared to other refugee camps, the fighting was contained and remained a singular occurrence.

45. The fighting between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces signified the first time that LAF entered a Palestinian refugee camp. In an exception to the terms of the 1969 Cairo Agreement, under which Lebanese security forces generally

do not enter Palestinian refugee camps, the Palestine Liberation Organization fully agreed to and supported the Lebanese Armed Forces engagement. The Palestine Liberation Organization, through its resident representative and through its Chairman, remained in close contact with the Lebanese authorities throughout the crisis and has continued to do so since. The Palestine Liberation Organization has also expanded its representation in Lebanon in order to be effective under the given circumstances. Through my Special Coordinator in Lebanon, I have also maintained my dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in the country.

46. In the course of the fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam, more than 32,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced from Nahr al-Bared. The overwhelming majority fled to the nearby Baddawi refugee camp, which saw its population nearly double as a result and where needs of the displaced refugees could be addressed, though rudimentarily in some instances. Close to 5,000 refugees from Nahr al-Bared were displaced to refugee camps in Tyre, Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon. On 29 June, protests erupted among the displaced refugees in Baddawi refugee camp, with some 1,000 among them demanding to return to Nahr al-Bared. As approximately 100 of them broke off and marched towards LAF checkpoints, trying to force their way past them, gunfire erupted. Three protestors were killed; approximately 32 were injured.

47. The situation within Palestinian refugee camps remains precarious. There have been occasional armed clashes between Palestinian militias, including against the background of the Palestinian internecine violence in the Gaza Strip, specifically between Fatah on the one hand, and the Damascus-headquartered Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command on the other. Most recently, in early October, two people were wounded in a night-time gunfight between armed supporters of Fatah and those of Hamas in the Miyah-Miyah refugee camp near Sidon.

48. There remain fears, however, that both the precarious state of intra-Palestinian relations and continued poverty and suffering in Palestinian refugee camps, and the emergence of new militant groups in that context, may give rise to renewed violence in the camps and beyond them. Given the obvious detrimental effects of living conditions in the camps on the wider security situation in Lebanon, it is imperative that progress be made not only towards disbanding and disarming Palestinian militias in Lebanon, but also towards improving the conditions in which the refugee population lives, without prejudice to the settlement of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

49. An initial flash appeal by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for over $12.7 million was fully met in June. A number of Member States also pledged and provided significant aid to the Government to improve the situation of the affected Palestinian refugees. Since then, a three-pronged relief, recovery and reconstruction plan has been developed. Its first element is an UNRWA flash appeal for over $55 million, with a focus on the provision of basic services to the refugees from Nahr al-Bared, temporary shelter, and the clearing up of rubble and debris inside the old camp before any infrastructure rehabilitation. The second part of the plan is an emergency appeal for $28 million for socio-economic assistance issued by the Higher Relief Council of the Government of Lebanon, which addresses the needs of affected Lebanese

families and businesses in the vicinity of Nahr al-Bared. The third element is the establishment of an international donors' trust fund under World Bank auspices for the reconstruction of the camp's physical infrastructure and for employment-generating programmes for Palestinian refugees. I call on all Member States to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to rebuild Nahr al-Bared and improve living conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon more broadly. I urge donors to respond particularly to the latest flash appeal of UNRWA. In the meantime, the first families have begun returning to their homes in Nahr al-Bared.

Other Palestinian militias

50. In his latest briefing to the Security Council, my Special Envoy for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004) shared with the Council extensive information, which the Government of Lebanon provided after my previous report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) had been submitted. I also refer to the identical letters dated 12 June 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Lebanon to myself and the President of the Council, which also transmitted this information in detail. According to this information, the militias of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada have remained active during the reporting period and have reinforced their positions in Lebanon, allegedly with assistance from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic has rejected the allegations, most recently in its letter to me of 19 October 2007. The United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the conflicting information received from the Government of Lebanon and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

51. I have also received additional information from regional Member States indicating that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command provided logistical support to Fatah al-Islam during its fight against the Lebanese authorities, remains on alert and is preparing for possible operations. According to such information, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command also continues to maintain particularly close ties with Syria and with Hizbullah, and is receiving material and training from Iran.

52. Beyond the Government's successful struggle against Fatah al-Islam, there has been no progress towards the disarming of Palestinian militias in accordance with the agreement reached in the Lebanese National Dialogue of 2006 that Palestinian militias outside the camps would be disarmed. I urge all parties in Lebanon to resume the political dialogue and to reaffirm their commitment to the disarmament of Palestinian militias in Lebanon, in fulfilment of the terms of resolution 1559 (2004).

Hizbullah

53. The Government of Lebanon has provided the United Nations with information on the seizure of a truckload of Grad rockets, mortars and ammunition for automatic rifles and machine guns belonging to Hizbullah, seized on 5 June 2007 at a Lebanese Armed Forces checkpoint at Douriss near Baalbek in the Beqaa Valley, a few kilometres away from the border. These arms were being moved within the country. The incident appeared to be similar to the one that took place on 8 February 2007.

54. In its presidential statement adopted on 3 August 2007, the Security Council expressed concern at any allegation of rearming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese armed groups and militias and reiterated that there should be no sale or supply of arms and related material to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government. In that regard, it expressed concern about the statement by Hizbullah that it retained the military capacity to strike all parts of Israel, and called on all parties to refrain from statements and activities that could jeopardize the cessation of hostilities.

55. I have received renewed information from the Government of Israel and other Member States that Hizbullah has rebuilt and increased its military capacity compared to prior to the war of July and August 2006. According to this information and statements by Hizbullah leaders, the movement claims to have "twice as many people signing up for training".[2] UNIFIL, in collaboration with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has immediately investigated any claims of alleged violations of resolution 1701 (2006) within its area of operations if specific information and evidence are received.

56. The information I have received also indicates that Hizbullah has compensated for all losses sustained in the course of the war last year and has established a secure network of communications. Hizbullah's maintenance of an infrastructure of arms and communications that remains separate from the State has adverse effects on the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to assert its exclusive control over the entire territory of Lebanon in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004).

57. The eventual disarmament of Hizbullah in the sense of the completion of its transformation into a solely political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement, continues to represent a key element for the full restoration of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. It remains my belief, as previously stated, that the disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias must take place through a political process that will lead to the full affirmation of the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all of its territory. The ongoing political crisis has continued to prevent the parties in Lebanon from resuming their National Dialogue and from making progress on the implementation of the Government's seven-point plan, adopted on 27 July 2006, before the onset of the current crisis. Again, I urge all political parties in Lebanon to resume the political dialogue and to affirm their commitment to the disarmament of Lebanese militias in Lebanon, including Hizbullah, in fulfilment of resolution 1559 (2004).

Other Lebanese militias

58. While there have been continuous attempts to resolve the ongoing political crisis, now primarily revolving around the issue of the presidency, through dialogue and compromise, there continue to be widespread reports and allegations that parties and groups on all sides of the political spectrum are preparing for the possible failure of such negotiations, with armament and military training reported widely.

59. The Government of Lebanon, through the Prime Minister's letter to me of 8 October, informed me that, against the backdrop of the widespread perception and rumours of military training and rearmament and of some parties engaging in the distribution of weapons to their allies, a special cabinet session had been convened

[2] Interview with a senior Hizbullah official, *Financial Times*, 26 June 2007.

on 24 September. The Government further informed me that the Lebanese intelligence and security services confirmed that training on the use of personal weapons was taking place in some parts of the country. This information has been corroborated by reports that have reached me from other Member States in the region.

60. The Government of Lebanon further affirmed that "while training for protection and security purposes is reportedly taking place across the political spectrum, there is evidence of arms distribution and organized military training on the side of the opposition". Some of the groups concerned receive weapons and training from Hizbullah, according to the Government.

61. The Government of Lebanon has informed me that it views these reports of armament and training with a great deal of concern and that it has instructed all Government security agencies to do all they can, within the limits of the law, to stem this trend before it spreads further and begins to create an environment conducive to domestic conflict. Further, the Government has pressed all Government agencies to deal with all political groups and parties equally when implementing laws relating to weapons and training.

62. The re-emergence of militias is certainly one of the most disturbing developments over the past six months, in view of the persistent political crisis, and raises the spectre of possible armed clashes that would further restrict the functioning of the State's institutions. I am alarmed by the consistent allegations that militias on all sides of the political spectrum are reappearing, in contravention of both the Taif Agreement, which ended the civil war in Lebanon and led to the disbanding and disarming of most Lebanese militias, and resolution 1559 (2004).

General

63. I commend the Government for its vigilance and its endeavours to stem the tide of further deterioration of the situation in the country. I also call on all Lebanese parties to immediately halt all efforts to rearm and engage in weapons training, and to return instead to dialogue through the legitimate political institutions, in particular the Parliament, as the only viable method of settling issues and resolving the ongoing political crisis.

64. I reiterate once again my firm conviction that the disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias must take place through a political process that will lead to the full affirmation of the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all of its territory. Such a political process presupposes, in the first instance, clear respect of the Constitution by all parties, as well as dialogue and a spirit of cooperation between the various political forces in Lebanon. A return to political dialogue and a resolution of the ongoing political crisis in Lebanon — most notably the issue of the Lebanese presidency — is a necessary precondition for such a far-reaching political process.

D. Presidential election process

65. The adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004 took place in the context of preparations for the extension of President Lahoud's term in office. As the Council will recall, one day after the resolution was adopted, the Parliament

voted to amend the Constitution by a vote of 96 to 29, with three members not present, to allow President Lahoud to serve for an additional three years beyond the constitutionally prescribed single six-year term limit.

66. In the first report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2004/777), submitted on 1 October 2004, the Secretary-General noted his strong belief that Governments and leaders should not hold on to office beyond prescribed term limits.

67. Since September 2004, the extended term in office of President Lahoud has remained contested, as the periodic reports on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) have reflected. In the fourth semi-annual report on the implementation of the resolution (S/2006/832), it was noted that the issue of the Lebanese presidency had been discussed in several rounds of the National Dialogue, until the participants in the National Dialogue "agreed to disagree" on the subject in their seventh round of consultations. Reference was also made to the address by the Prime Minister of Lebanon to the Security Council on 21 April 2006, in which he said that "the majority in Parliament considers the extension of President Lahoud's term in September 2004 for three more years to have been the result of interference and coercion by Syria — which had great influence over the Lebanese Parliament at that time — against all of the advice discouraging such heavy-handed interference".

68. In my previous report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2007/262), I noted again that the parliamentary majority represented by the 14 March alliance continued to maintain that President Lahoud's presence in office was illegitimate. I also took note of a petition signed by 70 Members of Parliament in favour of a parliamentary session to ratify the statutory agreement on the international tribunal for Lebanon, in which signatories justified their resort to a petition with reference to "the position of the President of the Republic, whose mandate was extended in contravention of United Nations Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), and who continues in his attempt to obstruct the constitutional prerogatives of the legitimate Government of Lebanon". I further stated that, with the end of President Lahoud's extended term in office drawing nearer, a new president would have to be elected, in an electoral process that should be free and fair and conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence, in accordance with resolution 1559 (2004). I expressed my belief that such an election would also help revive the ordinary and constitutional political process in Lebanon.

69. The election of a new president is now essential for resolving the political crisis in Lebanon. The position must be filled once the prolonged term of the present incumbent comes to an end, lest the regular functioning of the political institutions remains impeded.

70. On 25 September, the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, attempted to convene Parliament for a first vote on a new president. However, while the parliamentary majority was present in full, the session was never opened, since fewer Members of Parliament attended than the two thirds whose votes would be necessary for a candidate to win during the first round, in accordance with the Constitution. The same day, the Speaker issued a call for Parliament to convene for a vote on the presidency on 23 October. This session has now been postponed to 12 November. However, on 16 October, the Lebanese Parliament did convene, for the first time during the present parliamentary session, in order to elect

parliamentary committees for the elections, as well as office-holders to facilitate the vote, should it take place.

71. Lebanese political leaders must aim for unity and conciliation. It is imperative that political dialogue resume. It is my conviction that a new president must be elected in a free and fair electoral process conducted strictly according to Lebanese constitutional rules, without any foreign interference or influence and within the constitutional time frame, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004), and with the broadest possible acceptance. There must not be a political vacuum at the level of the presidency.

72. I particularly commend the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, for initiating a dialogue with all relevant parties with the purpose of reaching reconciliation on the issue of the presidential election. This initiative has paved the way for an important dialogue between the opposition and the parliamentary majority. I strongly support the continuation of this dialogue. I have also taken positive note of the efforts by the Maronite Patriarch to institute a dialogue among Christian leaders. Despite such commendable efforts, there remain widespread fears in Lebanon that the constitutional deadline of 24 November for the election of a new president may be missed and that there will be no resolution of the crisis. The result could be either a constitutional void, or the emergence of two rival governments, each disputing the constitutional legitimacy of the other. The regrettable precedent of a presidency left vacant by the lack of dialogue and accord in 1988 illustrates the dangers inherent in such a development of the emergence of two competing governments and a new wave of suffering and destruction by competing forces.

III. Observations

73. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), Lebanon has continued to suffer setbacks in its struggle to reassert, beyond dispute, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence. Once again I salute the brave Lebanese people and their political leaders, who stand firm in that struggle. The United Nations remains as committed as ever to helping them complete the historical transition that has been under way in Lebanon since September 2004. For this purpose, I have remained in close contact with all relevant parties in the region and beyond.

74. Over the past six months, Lebanon has lived through yet another difficult chapter in its efforts to assert its sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence, extend governmental control over all Lebanese territory and ensure that there are no weapons outside the Government's control. In combination, the explosions, assassinations, incidents in south Lebanon and the prolonged fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam have manifested the precarious state of security in Lebanon. Security conditions have combined with the political stalemate to create a climate of enduring crisis, with adverse effects more widely on Lebanese society and the economy. Many Members of Parliament are spending most of their time abroad. Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem, for example, returned from a prolonged sojourn abroad just two days before his assassination. Overall, the conditions prevailing in Lebanon are not conducive to the reassertion of the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence.

75. In the context of prolonged political crisis, the challenge from militias and allegations of widespread rearming and paramilitary training, the authority of the Government of Lebanon has remained constrained and contested, as has its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The most notable challenge during this period has come from Fatah al-Islam. I commend and congratulate the people and Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces for successfully weathering a critical test on the road to a truly free and sovereign Lebanon.

76. Yet, many challenges remain if Lebanon is to free itself from the vestiges of a captive past in a sustainable manner. First and foremost, I call for political dialogue in Lebanon to resume on all relevant matters, most notably the issue of the Lebanese presidency and the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

77. In the aftermath of the victory over Fatah al-Islam, it is essential now that the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces maintain their vigilance and efforts, for the welfare and security of all people living in Lebanon. It is also paramount that political discussions resume among all Lebanese parties, leading them to reaffirm their commitment to the disarmament of Palestinian militias in Lebanon, in fulfilment of the terms of resolution 1559 (2004).

78. I am also deeply conscious of the conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the challenges that arise from them. It is imperative that the close cooperation that has been established between PLO and the Lebanese authorities continue, for the welfare of the Palestinian refugees who already have too often paid the price for the misdeeds of others. I commend both the Government of Lebanon and PLO for their role in re-establishing security in the camps, but call on them to undertake tangible measures now to improve significantly the conditions in which the refugee population lives, without prejudice to the settlement of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The United Nations family stands ready to work with our Lebanese and Palestinian partners towards this goal, while we also exert all efforts to help bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement at the earliest time possible.

79. The information that I continue to receive, suggesting that Hizbullah has rebuilt and increased its military capacity compared to the period prior to the war of July and August 2006, is deeply disconcerting and stands in stark contradiction to the terms of resolution 1559 (2004). I restate my conviction that the eventual disarmament of Hizbullah in the sense of the completion of its transformation into a solely political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement, is an element of critical importance for the future of a fully sovereign, united and politically independent Lebanon. I urge renewed political dialogue in Lebanon to affirm the commitment of all parties to the disarmament of Lebanese militias in Lebanon, including Hizbullah, in fulfilment of the terms of resolution 1559 (2004). I also expect the unequivocal cooperation of all relevant regional parties who have the ability to support such a process, most notably the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which maintain close ties with the party, for the sake of the security, stability and welfare of both Lebanon and the wider region.

80. Not once since the end of the civil war has there been a presidential election in Lebanon conducted according to constitutional rules, without any constitutional amendments and without foreign interference. In 1989, President Elias Hrawi was elected in Shtoura, far away from the parliamentary chamber, to replace the

assassinated René Mouawwad, who had been appointed at a military airport in the north of Lebanon. President Hrawi's term of office was extended in 1995 for an additional three years beyond the constitutionally prescribed regular term of six years. President Émile Lahoud's election in 1998 was made possible by a constitutional amendment allowing the former chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces to run in the elections. President Lahoud's term of office was extended for three additional years in 2004 by another constitutional amendment. Therefore, this time, after the withdrawal of Syrian troops, military assets and military intelligence apparatus, the Lebanese have the opportunity to conduct a free and fair presidential election process, according to Lebanese constitutional rules and without any foreign interference, for the first time since the end of the civil war. Such an election would signify a major milestone on the road towards the full re-assertion by Lebanon of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence, as is the goal of resolution 1559 (2004).

81. With the upcoming presidential election, it is my strong belief that the Lebanese people and their political representatives must rise to the occasion and turn a new page in their difficult history. There must not be a constitutional void at the level of the presidency, nor two rival governments. Constitutional provisions should be fully respected. In consequence, political dialogue must make it possible for a new president to be elected before the constitutional deadline of 24 November. I urge the Lebanese political parties to engage in a constructive dialogue and aim for conciliation, in full respect of the Taif Agreement. The president should enjoy the broadest possible acceptance.

82. I continue to be deeply concerned at the prevailing security conditions in Lebanon. The fact that these have forced many Members of Parliament to reside permanently abroad or in seclusion, under extremely tight security, in their own country, is unacceptable. It can also not go unnoticed that the most recent assassination of Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem, in combination with previous assassinations of members of the ruling coalition, reduced its majority to 68 out of the now 127 Members of Parliament and raised the spectre not only of further deterioration of the situation, but also of an upset of the political balance that has existed since the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2005. The pattern of political assassinations in Lebanon strongly suggests a concerted effort aimed at undermining the democratic institutions of Lebanon and the continued exercise of the political functions of the democratically elected representatives of the sovereign people of Lebanon.

83. It is equally disconcerting to observe that most political parties in Lebanon are apparently preparing for the possible further deterioration of the situation. Rearmament and military training directly contravene the call contained in resolution 1559 (2004) for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. I commend the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese security services for their continued vigilance in this regard and their efforts aimed at calming the situation. I also repeat my urgent call on all Lebanese parties to immediately halt all efforts to re-arm and engage in weapons training, and to return instead to dialogue and conciliation as the only viable method of settling issues and resolving the ongoing political crisis.

84. A return to political dialogue among the Lebanese parties is absolutely imperative under the current conditions, and the only way to resolve all relevant

issues. Lebanon must preserve its comprehensive and, most importantly, conciliatory political framework, as manifested in the Taif Agreement.

85. I am of course acutely aware that such a framework also necessitates the renewed support and engagement of all relevant external parties and supporters of Lebanon. Without it, Lebanon will not be able to take further steps towards reasserting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, or to sustain such progress in the long term. But I am equally convinced that the deep foreign involvement in Lebanon have done little to decrease tension in that country. Instead, the foreign penetration and interference in Lebanon have only worsened the crisis. It is time that foreign interference stop and that the Lebanese people and their political representatives alone determine the fate of Lebanon.

86. In this context, I reiterate my expectation vis-à-vis the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular, that it cooperate on all relevant issues related to the full implementation of all provisions of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I welcome the assertions and pledges in the Syrian Arab Republic's recent letter to me and expect to see the Syrian Arab Republic's commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon reflected in further tangible steps in the coming period.

87. I remain keenly aware of the interlinkages between the various conflicts in the region. It is my most profound belief that all possible efforts must be exerted to attain a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for all peoples in the region. The achievement of such peace throughout the entire Middle Eastern region, consistent with all relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the full restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon will remain contingent upon each other.

88. I will continue my efforts to assist all parties in the quest for peace and stability in the region, and in the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I also reiterate my call on all parties and actors to support the reconstruction and political transformation of Lebanon, and to urgently take all enabling measures to this end, as outlined in the Taif Agreement and in resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

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The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Letter dated 23 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Israel continues to occupy Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, in flagrant defiance of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and in contravention of numerous resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations in this regard. All of the actions of the Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Syrian Golan, and in the occupied Arab territories in general, represent a flagrant violation of the standards of international law and international humanitarian law.

In a recent violation of the provisions of international humanitarian law, the occupying Israeli authorities uprooted 150 cherry seedlings belonging to Mr. Salim Hamad 'Uwaydat from occupied Majdal Shams on the morning of Thursday, 27 September 2007. Mr. Salim 'Uwaydat went to his land in al-Hafa'ir in the morning to work on the land which he had planted approximately one year previously with cherry seedlings and was surprised to find that more than 150 of the cherry seedlings that he had planted had been uprooted completely.

As you are aware, the founding principles of international humanitarian law emphasize that the occupying forces must not in any way target civilian objects and the provisions of this law absolutely prohibit interference with such property and emphasize the responsibility of the occupying authorities to provide full protection for it. As Israel is the occupying Power and a contracting party to the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, it is

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therefore bound to apply the provisions of the Convention which stipulates in its article 53 that "Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited [...]." Article 147 of the same Convention also prohibits the destruction and appropriation of property not justified by military necessity by the occupying forces as grave breaches of the Convention. International humanitarian law also prohibits the destruction of crops that constitute a source of relief for the population and prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. It also stipulates that it is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless [...] foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works [...] (Protocol I, chapter III, article 54).

The hostile actions and practices of Israel are contrary to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1996, which stipulates in its article 1 that "In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence." The policy of uprooting trees, which is systematically pursued by the occupying authorities through the office known as the Israeli Custodian of Abandoned Private Properties, is one way of putting pressure upon Syrian citizens to abandon their land so that it can be confiscated by the occupying authorities. However, the inhabitants of the occupied Golan have continued to demonstrate their determination and unremitting resolve to plant every inch of their land.

My delegation calls on you and, through you, on the United Nations, as the trustee for the application of international conventions and treaties, to put pressure upon Israel, the occupying Power, and prevail upon it to desist from these illegal and inhumane practices.

My country's delegation wishes the present letter to be circulated as an official document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly under agenda items 17, 33 and 41, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative